



TIOGA COUNTY COVID-19 STRATEGIC ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

Tioga County Economic Recovery Advisory Council



TIOGA COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING

RONALD E. DOUGHERTY COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING,
56 MAIN STREET, OWEGO, NY 13827 / (607) 687-8255
WWW.TIOGACOUNTYNY.COM



INTRODUCTION

On March 7, 2020 New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo declared a state of emergency with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic health crisis. Across the State, non-essential businesses closed Sunday March 22nd, when Governor Cuomo announced the “New York State on PAUSE” executive order, a 10-point policy to assure uniform safety for everyone. New York State allowed non-essential businesses to reopen on a regional and industry specific basis, as each region met the criteria necessary to protect public health. The State’s plan focused on getting New Yorkers back to work- without triggering renewed spread of the COVID-19 virus or overwhelming the local hospital systems and medical community.

Tioga County and the Southern Tier region, received direction and guidelines from the Governor for the phased plan to reopen New York. The State established the New York Forward Re-Opening Advisory Board made up of over 100 businesses, community and civic leaders from industries across the State.

Counties across the State set out to bring communities and businesses back while adhering to the guidelines and protocols provided. Tioga County worked to formulate and implement an immediate economic recovery response plan. The transmission of COVID-19 would remain a threat to employees and customers for some time. Each business owner would need to adapt to the “new normal”; plans to protect employees and consumers, to make the physical work space safe, and to implement processes that lowered the risk of infection in their businesses were developed and implemented.

Once the initial response work was underway, the Tioga County Economic Recovery Advisory Council (TCERAC) was formed, made up of 26 representatives of key leaders and stakeholders from sectors across the County. The purpose of TCERAC was to share information among service providers regarding the anticipated impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on communities and businesses countywide. The advisory council established work groups to identify and address the needs of various economic and community sectors.

The result of this work is the Tioga County Strategic Economic Recovery Plan which will provide a guide for next steps with a clearly defined goal, “to create an action plan to position Tioga County for success in the future economy”.

Table of Contents

Introduction	02
1. Executive Summary	03
2. Timeline	04
3. Response Actions	05
4. Committee Structure	07
5. Agriculture	08
6. Private Business	09
7. Nonprofit Organizations	10
8. Hospitality and Retail Businesses	11
9. Human Services	12
10. Real Estate Trends	13
11. Schools	14
12. Technology	15
13. Workforce Development	16
14. Implementation	17
15. Acknowledgements	18
	19



COMMON THEMES

The following topics were noted by most Committees of the Advisory Council:

HOUSING

CHILDCARE

BROADBAND /
INTERNET
CONNECTION

WORKFORCE
RETENTION

MARKETING /
PROMOTION

These common topics have an impact on all aspects of recovery; committees recommended actions based on the following decision criteria:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE: to create an action plan to position Tioga County for success in the future economy



Agriculture Decision Criteria

- Actions must address or contribute to a secure community food system.



Private Business Decision Criteria

- Increase private business resiliency to withstand pandemic closures without impacts.
- Ensure our businesses survive and thrive.



Nonprofit Organizations Decision Criteria

- Assist NPO's to becoming pandemic proof.
- Transform our NPO's to "business" models that operate sustainably.



Hospitality and Retail Businesses Decision Criteria

- Attract an increase in customers and visitors to hospitality and retail businesses throughout the County.
- Enhance customer experience.
- Benefit all hospitality and retail businesses.



Human Services Decision Criteria

- Protect the health and safety of Tioga County residents by maintaining spread of the COVID-19 daily infection rate to 1% or less.
- Identify new and underserved mental health services consumers.
- Connect job seekers with long-term, meaningful employment.
- Outreach and communicate to ensure county residents have access to services in order to maintain family and community economic security during pandemic.
- Build our non-profit organization's capacity to serve as many of those in need as possible.



Workforce Development Decision Criteria

- Connect job seekers with meaningful long-term, local employment.
- Actions should be consistent with the career pipeline strategy outlined in the Tioga County Workforce Strategy.
- Help youth obtain long-term career opportunities versus short-term employment.
- Create an environment that allows businesses to be more resilient.



Schools Decision Criteria

- 2020-2021 seniors will matriculate through graduation.
- Meet vocational needs through more in-house programs.
- Maintain open schools; maintain school work force.



Technology Decision Criteria

- Provide 100% of addresses in Tioga County with robust, high-speed broadband and internet coverage.



Real Estate Trends Decision Criteria

- Improve appeal of both residential and industrial/commercial properties so we have inventory that is ready to move.
- Keep small businesses open.
- Work to make landlords solvent.

STRATEGIC ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

Process Timeline 2020

01

MARCH 2020

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

TEAM Tioga compiled a database of businesses within Tioga County by economic sector. A needs assessment survey was distributed via email to more than 600 local businesses. TEAM Tioga comprehensively and personally followed up with each business that requested assistance. Tioga County created the COVID-19 Emergency Relief fund, offering small businesses financial loan assistance to those who did not, or could not, access the federal Small Business Administration loan programs.

April 2020

TIOGA COUNTY ECONOMIC RECOVERY ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Tioga County Economic Recovery Advisory Council was formed in April of 2020 to share information regarding the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and pandemic on communities and businesses countywide.

02

03

MAY 2020

WORK GROUPS

The Tioga County Economic Recovery Advisory Council established Work Groups to address the needs of various economic and community sectors. This phase was called Response, which occurred during the first two to three months of the economic shutdown, between mid-March and mid-July of 2020.

The structure of the Work Groups was as follows:

Private Sector

- Business,
- Agriculture
- Employment
- Real Estate

Public Sector

- Schools
- Social Services
- Nonprofit Organizations

JULY 2020

REVISED COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

RESPONSE actions were documented, the effort then transformed into creating the Tioga County Strategic Economic Recovery Plan. The purpose, outline, and process were established for the plan, and a new committee structure was formed. Strategic actions including RECOVERY (up to six months) and REDEVELOPMENT (up to one year) were included.

04

05

AUGUST 2020

ACTION PLAN

This Committee work took place in August and September of 2020. The results of this process are detailed in this report, organized by the Committee structure, corresponding with the economic sectors.

Decision criteria on which to evaluate strategic actions were determined; short and long term impacts and strategic actions were established for each economic sector.

OCTOBER 2020

IMPLEMENTATION

The Strategic Planning Committee and Work Group participants will work together to complete the strategic actions listed in this Plan within the next six months to one year. The goal upon completion of these actions is for our businesses and community services to be better able to sustain operations and be more resilient during economic disruptions that may occur in the future.

06

RESPONSE ACTIONS

The RESPONSE phase of the COVID-19 Strategic Economic Recovery Plan is defined as "the assessment of the conditions and actions taken in the first two to three months of the pandemic health crisis in an effort to remedy or reduce the immediate impacts." This section outlines the response activities conducted by TEAM Tioga, as well as the Work Groups derived from Tioga County's Economic Advisory Council.

BUSINESS SUB WORK GROUP: TOURISM & RETAIL BUSINESSES

Current Situation

- Encourage customers to patronize businesses.
- Promote mask wearing to show Tioga County is a safe place to visit.
- Show support for our businesses that are required to enforce state safety mandates.

Actions Accomplished

- Implemented "Welcome Back Tioga" campaign featuring different business sectors and using visuals of business owners in masks.
- Distributing press release re: supporting local businesses signed by several local business and merchant organizations.

BUSINESS SUB WORK GROUP: OTHER BUSINESSES

Current Situation

- Although particular industries such as home/lawn care retail are thriving, most businesses are struggling to survive.
- Particular industries such as gyms and casinos are at severe risk of closing indefinitely due to absence of reopening guidance from NYS.
- Many business owners hesitate taking on additional debt due to uncertainty of the future.

Actions Accomplished

- TEAM Tioga's second business survey asked businesses their most needed consulting services; aggregate responses provided to Bob Griffin at Small Business Development Center.
- TEAM Tioga social media and Tioga County Chamber of Commerce emails encouraged businesses to contact SBDC for various assistance.
- The group confirmed Matilda's Law was still in effect in order to gauge impact on workforce retention.
- TEAM Tioga social media, Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce, Tioga County Chamber of Commerce, and WEBO ads will remind businesses of available loan programs and contact information.
- Opportunity Zone research initiated but minimal progress to date.

AGRICULTURE

Current Situation

- Much of the agricultural sector in Tioga County, with the exception of dairy farming, has not been as severely impacted from this pandemic because consumers are more interested in purchasing local food.
- Produce, nurseries, livestock-realized increase in demand due to pandemic-interest in buying local due to supply chain disruptions.
- Dairy-struggled due to supply chain disruptions early on in pandemic-with reopening, retail demand is helping the recovery, and price of milk has gone back up.

Actions Accomplished

- Original objective- Communication of Updates to Farmers- utilize 3 different contact lists (Tioga County Economic Development & Planning, Tioga County Soil and Water Department, and Cornell Cooperative Extension) to ensure information got to as many people as possible. Multiple platforms utilized for same reason (ED&P FB, CCE email blast, etc.).
- Last meeting-sharing of updates-since Phase 4 opening, not many updates have flowed down from NYS for ag businesses, so the meeting focused on any updates subgroup committee members had regarding ag businesses in the county.

EMPLOYMENT

Current Situation

- True impacts of unemployment will not be known until NYS Unemployment Insurance and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance end on July 31.
- Workforce training programs have stalled due to uncertainty of future funding.
- Childcare availability will be an issue when workers can return to jobs.
- Employers need to know how to get employees back to work once allowed.

Actions Accomplished

- The Tioga County Career Center continues to assist customers with accessing unemployment benefits, resolving claim issues, and job searching.
- SUNY Broome Entrepreneurial Assistance Program offering technical assistance to small businesses to support strategic/pandemic business planning.
- Workforce Development partners will continue to encourage employers to take advantage of available funds already allocated for training purposes, as well as offer virtual training opportunities, and explore possibility of repurposing program funds to support employer driven workforce training initiatives as needed.
- Tioga County's Workforce Development Strategy includes several actions to address the impact of COVID crisis on Tioga County businesses and workforce.

RESPONSE ACTIONS CONTINUED

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Current Situation

- There are increased clientele emergency needs (unemployment, food insecurity, access to medications, etc.) while functioning with limited staff and volunteers (PPE) and severely restricted cash flow.
- Cancelled fundraisers.
- Unclear NYS reopening guidelines.
- Some of our not-for-profits are still not permitted to open.

• From CNN: "Covid-19 is poised to become an extinction-level event for America's nonprofits."

Actions Accomplished

- Constant communication with not-for-profits. Round table discussions as part of the Tioga County Nonprofit Network.
- 2 surveys sent to not-for-profits, plus Community Foundation for South Central NY needs assessment.
- Communicating situation with funders. Working to establish funders speakers series.
- Established Tioga County Foundations Coalition Emergency Fund.
- Participating in Community Foundation for South Central NY COVID-19 Response Fund.
- Providing grant-writing technical assistance as needed.
- Sharing resources and information in person, via email, and on County's COVID-19 webpage: PPE; reopening plans; sharing guidance about HR issues, contract issues, etc.

SCHOOLS

Current Situation

- Schools in a region can reopen if that region is in Phase IV of reopening and if its daily infection rate remains below 5 percent or lower using a 14-day average since unPAUSE was lifted.
- Schools will close if the regional infection rate rises above 9 percent, using a 7-day average, after August 1.
- New York State will make the formula determination during the week of August 1 to 7. New York State, the Reimagine Education Advisory Council and the Department of Health released finalized guidance and guiding principles for reopening schools July 13th. Plans to reopen schools are due on July 31.

Actions Accomplished

- Researched NYS guidance regarding graduation ceremonies, pools, summer camps, and safety affirmations.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Current Situation

- There could be a big surge in unemployment when PUI ends on July 31.
- Potential rental evictions when the NYS moratorium ends on August 30.
- Childcare demands when people get back to work and/or parents decide to teach children at home this fall instead of sending their children to school.

Actions Accomplished

- Unemployment and rental evictions impacts cannot be assessed until those respective deadlines expire.
- Attempting to survey known landlords regarding rental payments to anticipate what eviction-related trends they expect to see after August 30.
- Researching Corning, Inc.'s contributions to local daycare programs in Corning / Steuben County.

REAL ESTATE

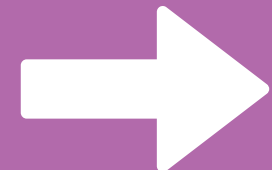
Current Situation

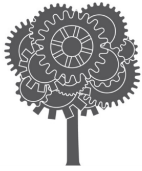
- Current sales comparison in Tioga County show a slight increase from January to August 2019 compared with same timeframe in 2020. The Greater Binghamton Area Realty Board has its lowest active residential listings number (572) since 2006.

Actions Accomplished

- Researched the current sales statistics and trends to obtain a snapshot of the county's economy in terms of real estate transactions.

After RESPONSE actions were documented, the effort then transformed into creating the Tioga County Strategic Economic Recovery Plan; to include both RECOVERY strategic actions of up to six months and REDEVELOPMENT strategic actions of up to one year. A new Committee structure was established as well as the purpose and outline of the Plan. The next sections describe the process and results.

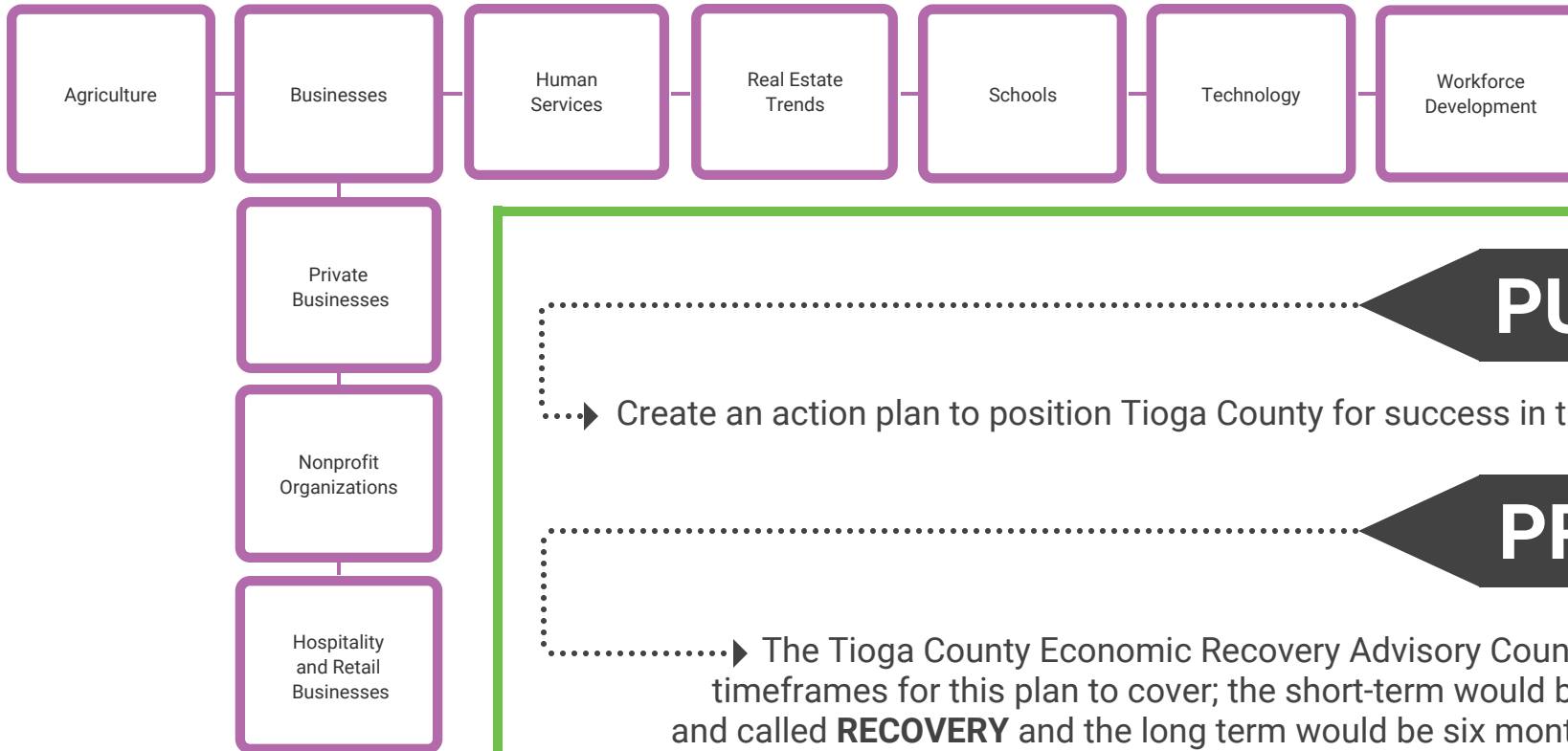




STRATEGIC ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

The Tioga County Economic Recovery Advisory Council created a new committee structure to correlate with the topics of the strategic plan. These committees are as follows

New Committee Structure



PURPOSE

...► Create an action plan to position Tioga County for success in the future economy.

PROCESS

► The Tioga County Economic Recovery Advisory Council established two timeframes for this plan to cover; the short-term would be up to six months and called **RECOVERY** and the long term would be six months to one year and be called **REDEVELOPMENT**. The Committees then established decision criteria on which to evaluate strategic actions, and developed RECOVERY and REDEVELOPMENT impacts and strategic actions.

The results of this process are detailed in the following pages, organized by the Committee structure, corresponding with the economic sector.

AGRICULTURE

Decision Criteria:

Actions must address or contribute to a secure community food system.

6 months

RECOVERY Impacts

- If schools have to close again this fall due to COVID 19 spread.
- Less hands-on experience in Ag In The Classroom.
- A good portion of Tioga County farmer's fluid Class III milk goes to Leprino, but farmers have not sold a lot of Class I milk recently due to restaurant and school closures.
- Farm closures if COVID-19 related agricultural subsidies end (federal direct to farm relief).
- We could experience food supply chain disruptions again this fall due to recent COVID-19 infection spikes in California and Florida.
- Amish probably not impacted – how to capitalize on this.
- Slaughter facility meat processing bottleneck in winter due to farmers' animal finishing habits.

6 months

RECOVERY Strategic Actions

- Focus Ag in the Classroom to on-farm visits as much as possible, if extra-curricular sports are allowed in school districts.
- Pursue feasible alternative coops (from DFA) for dairy farmers.
- Determine the demand curve for regional USDA meat processing facilities.
- Conduct a needs assessment for Amish families.
- Share successful marketing experiences amongst farmers.
- Connect farmers to the Food Bank of the Southern Tier as a direct sales outlet - Caroline Tolbert, Food Sourcer, Food Bank of the Southern Tier, caroline.tolbert@foodbankst.org, 607-796-6061.
- Promote the STREDC Rural Initiative Loan Fund, as well the Tioga County COVID Emergency Relief Program to farming businesses.
- Consult and encourage farmers/producers to use ecommerce for direct sales – web and social media – perhaps Ag in the Classroom students could assist farmers with this.
- Connect farmers to Binghamton University's SBDC for ecommerce assistance.
- Utilize email lists created by CCE, TCSWD, and Farm Bureau should be utilized to connect farmers to potential direct marketing sources and other resources.
- Work with DFA and USDA to address disruption in fluid milk supply chain.
- Update the Agricultural Resource Directory.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Impacts

- Waning of COVID-19 impact could result in reduced local consumer interest as well as demand for local food.
- More school and restaurant closures will mean less Class 1 milk sold.
- Limited ability and capacity of farmers to direct-market their produce.
- Lack of volume and consistency in locally-grown produce; short growing season.
- Will there be more federal aid /relief for farmers in future COVID-19 relief packages.
- Limited choices in fluid milk coops available for dairy farmers to sell milk to.
- Preponderance of micro-dairies regulations inhibit independent milk processing and selling.
- Lack of broadband and Phase 3 electric availability in rural areas reduces farms ability to operate and market efficiently or expand.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Strategic Actions

- Educate meat farmers how to finish animals throughout the year, alleviating the winter bottleneck at meat processing plants.
- Assist potential micro dairies to succeed by developing and providing them a successful model or "play book", including how to construct physical plants that will pass USDA inspection.
- Continue to support direct to farm federal aid packages.
- Educate producers on extending growing seasons by methods such as using high tunnels.
- Educate producers on growing longer season vegetables such as kale and spinach.
- Educate institutions on the nuances of buying directly from farmers.
- Provide all school students with a connection to local farms and food, as they are the future food purchasers and consumers, to boost farm sales long-term.
- Market Tioga County to Amish farmers from Ohio and Pennsylvania to relocate here.
- If feasible and sustainable, establish an Amish produce/foods auction.
- Connect Amish families to the Tri County Farm Trail.
- Consider ways to increase demand for local produce, address the consistency and volume of growing produce, and selling dairy farmers' Class I milk.
- Educate the public on the business of dairy farming and why dumping of raw fluid milk is forced given the current milk coop situation.
- Support the development of adequate internet access in rural underserved areas.
- Seek funding to connect rural farm businesses with NYSEG's 3 Phase electricity based on location of infrastructure.
- Provide interested farms with more business plan development assistance
- Implement actions as identified in the Karen Karp and Partners Agricultural Value Chain Study.

PRIVATE BUSINESSES

Decision Criteria:

- Increase private business resiliency to withstand pandemic closures without impacts.
- Ensure our businesses survive and thrive.

6 months

RECOVERY Impacts

- Many businesses struggling to pivot.
- E-Commerce set up costs are high.
- Increase in some raw materials costs.
- Some operational materials, building supply materials, and resources are still unavailable.
- Consumers may not be aware of small business re-openings, hours, etc.

6 months

RECOVERY Strategic Actions

- Create networking tool for businesses to connect regarding need for supply materials.
- Connect our small businesses to the three BU SBDC consulting programs as quickly as possible:
 - Human Resources employee handbook / policy review for state and federal compliance.
 - COVID-19 Recovery Advisory Team
 - Ecommerce website assistance
- Outreach to small businesses encouraging them to take three immediate actions to communicate to consumers change in business operations:
 - Update their Google My Business listing
 - Update their website listing
 - Update their social media
- Explore ecommerce webinar training for small businesses perhaps to be offered through the Tioga County Chamber of Commerce.
- Refer struggling seasonal small businesses to BU SBDC for assistance
- Encourage businesses to post safety protocols visibly and have hand sanitizer and sign-in sheets (where appropriate) at the entrance of establishment to boost consumer confidence.
- Create a mini-marketing campaign to attract downstate entrepreneurs and small businesses.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Impacts

- Decrease in business occupancy restrictions could possibly become permanent, causing declining revenue, and an increase in vacant commercial or industrial space, especially rental space.
- Some of our businesses will not survive due to decreased revenue plus increased cost of safety compliance.
- Consumer confidence is weak for on-site engagement, and will likely remain so for a long time.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Strategic Actions

- Conduct consumer-focused social media marketing campaign to restore in-person patronage.
- Facilitate the creation of quality housing opportunities, including higher density maintenance-free options, at higher price points for interested home buyers
- Expand lobbying efforts to NYS legislators regarding stringent workers compensation and contractors liability insurance requirements that add to high cost of construction for housing developers.
- Collaborate with nearby colleges to encourage students to live in Tioga County after graduation.
- Market to downstate areas to encourage families to relocate to Tioga County especially given working from home opportunities.
- Create innovative entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly for those interested in relocating from the NYC / downstate area, or via university or business collaborations.

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS



Decision Criteria:

- Assist NPO's to becoming pandemic proof.
- Transform our NPO's to "business" models that operate sustainably.

6 months

RECOVERY Impacts

- Childcare availability is limited, and the variability among school districts reopening plans will make childcare more difficult for parents, impacting nonprofits workforce availability and therefore NPO operations.
- Fundraising ability of NPOs has been decimated, while at the same time state funds have decreased by 20% and competition for other funds has increased.
- PPE availability could again be in short supply after schools reopen, which is especially needed for NPO workers in the field.
- NPOs have experienced staff reductions due to decreased revenues, negatively impacting operations.
- Volunteer workforce has reduced due to retiree volunteers not wanting to risk exposure, as well as decreases in family-aged volunteers due to family obligations.
- Technology needed to accommodate remote operations cost money that was not budgeted, further reducing NPO's operational budgets.
- A surplus of digital offerings by NPOs could create an overloaded consumable market.
- Increase demand for NPO services, yet decreased staff, volunteers and operational budgets.
- Free services / offerings do not sustain or contribute to NPO's bottom line.
- COVID-19 safety requirements have decreased NPO operational efficiency.
- NPO's administrative functions have slowed considerably to due to no in-person meetings.

6 months

RECOVERY Strategic Actions

- Utilize existing NPO assessments, identify gaps, establish priorities for need.
- Work with other committees on establishing a childcare inventory and assist to fill gaps wherever we can. Perhaps take a more community approach to summer and Before and After School care instead of relying on daycare facilities.
- Assist NPO's to create an optimal and effective on-line presence.
- Distribute 2020 Census facemasks to NPO's in need.
- Restructure the Tioga County Nonprofit Network to focus on improving NPO's operations and creating financial sustainability.
- Start purchasing needed technology subscriptions and equipment via an entity that purchases in bulk or is willing to share to reduce cost per item.
- Research availability of funds through national foundations – again perhaps shared cost subscription to a Foundations Directory.
- NPO's will need to continue to adapt with less volunteers, which actually helps with added space requirements for social distancing.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Impacts

- Which NPO's will donors target when competition is so fierce? How will other funding sources, such as local foundations determine funding priorities?
- NYS and federal future funding source for NPO's is uncertain.
- How many smaller NPO's will survive?
- NPO's need more priority help with operational issues, but focus on capital projects.
- NPO's will be forced to put off capital projects, pushing off needed capital repairs and improvements.
- Typically local governments and NPO's do not have solid partnerships.
- NPO's will likely be leaving rental spaces as they will not need as much space.
- There are no quick solutions to increasing capacity of smaller or "weaker" NPO's.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Strategic Actions

- Educate NPO's to not rely on federal, state and grant financial resources by diversifying revenue streams so there is not as much competition for common financial resources for the same purpose.
 - Develop non-traditional sources of income.
 - Pool resources to pay for shared services such as accounting or purchasing, insurance, etc.
- Create a Childcare Task Force to improve the shortage crisis on a systemic level.
- Find appropriate resources for NPOs to get comprehensive assistance for offering, producing, ticketing and managing professional-grade virtual events, performances and tours.
- Identify and refine municipal partnerships with NPOs, continue and expand additional opportunities.
- Define an NPO advocacy agenda and promote at the state level in a larger, collaborative voice.
- Facilitate communication between local funders (TCFC) and TCNN to communicate needs so funders can better assist NPOs in service to the community.
- Research funding sources that provide operating funds.

HOSPITALITY AND RETAIL BUSINESSES



Decision Criteria:

- Attract an increase in customers and visitors to hospitality and retail businesses throughout the County
- Enhance customer experience
- Benefit all hospitality and retail businesses

6 months

RECOVERY Impacts

- While not as many as expected, some small retail businesses and restaurants have closed permanently leaving vacant storefronts in downtown areas.
- Employee layoffs and furloughs may increase small businesses unemployment rate contribution; impact uncertain at this time.
- Safety restrictions will prevent in-person fall and holiday festivals which will significantly reduce restaurants and retail shops revenues.
- Business closures have decreased occupancy, sales and casino tax which decreases municipal revenue shares and reduces municipal and county 2020 budgets.
- Some businesses have experienced difficulty in finding suitable job candidates and new employees.
- Tioga Downs Casino and Resort must be able to reopen before October 1.
- Leisure and business travelers prefer staying in Airbnbs, bed and breakfasts, and inns over chain hotels.
- Hampton Inn and Tioga Downs Hotel shut down even though they were not required to.

6 months

RECOVERY Strategic Actions

- Create and maintain a database inventory of vacant storefronts to utilize between ED&P, COC, WBA and HOM to coordinate active recruitment of businesses to fill vacancies.
- Create a standard mural / graphic to place in vacant storefront windows.
- Tioga County Chamber of Commerce will communicate with DOL resources regarding unemployment rates and be a resource for small businesses regarding this information.
- Support and promote the alternative plans that restaurants and retail shops put in place in lieu of holiday events.
- Municipalities will have to adjust budgets due to decreases in sales tax and casino tax revenues.
- Refer businesses having a hard time recruiting and retaining suitable job candidates to the Tioga Career Center.
- TEAM Tioga and TC Chamber of Commerce will disseminate accurate information on Tioga Downs reopening.
- Aggressively promote the chain hotels and Tioga Downs hotel, including their safety precautions in place and visiting incentives.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Impacts

- Businesses not able to adapt to necessary new ways of operations will face difficult times and potential closure.
- Continued closure of Tioga Downs and required capacity safety restrictions when reopened will reduce revenue share for 2021 municipal and county budgets.
- Residual out of town visitor downturn will last two to five years, particularly fly-in visitors to the Finger Lakes Region.
- Businesses closed and vacant storefronts in our small downtowns are unattractive and could lead to blight.
- Continued reduced occupancy in chain hotels due to reduced event and business travelers will further impact their own revenues and county occupancy tax.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Strategic Actions

- Secure grant funding for hands-on small business technical assistance in the form of a support tool kit and on-site consultation.
- Municipalities will have to prepare 2021 budgets in a manner that accommodates decreased sales and casino tax shared revenues.
- Connect: TCT will stay connected with New York State, Finger Lakes Region and Southern Tier Region partner organizations to help promote Tioga County as part of the regional destination.
- Market empty storefronts utilizing the empty storefronts database and coordinating with downtown merchant associations and realtors.
- Fund: Continue funding cost-effective digital marketing efforts on a regional basis including Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council, Finger Lakes Wine Country and I Love NY.
- Support and assist Waverly Business Association as they implement the Waverly Comprehensive Plan Update and pursue economic development opportunities in the downtown area.
- Market Tioga County to the NYS and downstate areas to relocate here.

HUMAN SERVICES



Decision Criteria:

- Protect the health and safety of Tioga County residents by maintaining spread of the COVID-19 daily infection rate to 1% or less.
- Identify new and underserved mental health services consumers.
- Connect job seekers with long-term, meaningful employment.
- Outreach and communicate to ensure county residents have access to services in order to maintain family and community economic security during pandemic.
- Build our non-profit organization's capacity to serve as many of those in need as possible.

6 months

RECOVERY Impacts

- What will happen to rental residents not paying rent when NYS eviction moratorium ends on September 4, or whenever the extensions end.
- Landlords impacts without revenue of past months rental payments.
- Childcare availability for workers' children is limited, which will worsen if schools close again.
- Potential Tioga Downs permanent shut down on October 1 and loss of 600 jobs.
- Potential re-spike in COVID-19 infections due to K-12 schools reopening.
- Potential smaller spike in COVID-19 due to gyms and fitness centers reopening.
- Assessment of net unemployed and services offered to them.
- 20% cut in state aid for all human services, definitive retroactively from April 1, 2020
- Increase in services for substance abuse and suicide prevention.

6 months

RECOVERY Strategic Actions

- Utilize the Medical Reserve Corp volunteers for contact tracing if necessary.
- Continue frequent and extensive messaging of social distancing and wearing face masks.
- Continue strict quarantines for visitors from designated states with significant community spread and residents returning from those designated states.
- Assess net unemployed pool to provide appropriate employment services.
- Encourage Governor Cuomo to release reopening guidance for non-native casinos and allow them to reopen before October 1.
- Survey landlords to assess rental arrears and renters that may be evicted.
- Collaborate with existing nonprofits to make efficient use of funds available for paying back rent and continue referrals to DSS.
- Ensure adequate staffing at Mental Hygiene's Mental Health and Substance Abuse Clinics.
- Assess childcare needs of workforce, particularly at businesses and schools.
- Provide targeted messaging through Suicide Prevention Coalition and Substance Abuse Coalition.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Impacts

- COVID-19 infections are dependent on residents' and visitors' compliance with social distancing and facemasks requirements.
- Isolation effects on children, especially if there are more school closures.
- More possibility of unreported child abuse and neglect, especially if there are more school closures, as school officials are the largest reporting source.
- Current unemployment benefits are exhausted next summer; what happens to those that are jobless at that point.
- Another shut down will greatly hurt our small businesses.
- Landlord revenue impacts, depending on how long NYS eviction moratorium lasts.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Strategic Actions

- Use ESG (Emergency Solutions Grant) from the CARES Act funds to stop and limit number of evictions; these funds are available through 2022.
- Place evicted residents in other available housing situations should funding run out.
- Explore alternative means of messaging for awareness of child abuse and neglect signs such as digital media and use of OCFS messaging.
- Connect childcare survey respondents to appropriate agency/resource.
- Convene group of childcare experts to develop systemic actions to address shortage.
- Continue collaborations with NPOs that provide additional services such as food pantries.
- Continue partnerships with NPOs that provide mental health and substance abuse services.
- Provide Mental Health First Aid Training to all Tioga County school districts.
- Tioga Career Center will continue to offer unemployment services and information to job seekers and businesses, including Rapid Response Team.

REAL ESTATE TRENDS



Decision Criteria:

- Improve appeal of both residential and industrial/commercial properties so we have inventory that is ready to move.
- Keep small businesses open.
- Work to make landlords solvent.

6 months

RECOVERY Impacts

- Small businesses that close who are also building owners and live in their buildings will lose their business and their homes.
- End of eviction moratorium might leave landlords without back rent payment.
- Reduction of new property sales will result in less county filing tax revenue.
- Nonprofit organizations' financial struggles could lead to them abandoning their properties.
- Clients using federal public mortgage organizations often need financial help to cover closing costs.

6 months

RECOVERY Strategic Actions

- Establish a comprehensive first time home buyer / education program in Tioga County.
- Map and assess the number and value of tax exempt (non TCIDA Roll Section 8) properties in each municipality, particularly in the six villages.
- Educate small business on available COVID-19 financial recovery resource programs available to them.
- Support our small businesses with Buy Local campaigns.
- Direct landlords to the New York Forward Loan Fund and the Tioga County COVID-19 Emergency Relief Program to bridge financial gaps caused by rental arrears or to DSS for potential direct rental payments.
- Continue to monitor new mortgage tax and deed filings and re-evaluate in six months.
- Establish open communications before home closings involving buyers using federal mortgage agencies regarding course requirements and timelines; best means would be to write this information in the purchase contract or have the buyers complete the courses before buying a home.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Impacts

- Village downtowns could experience blight due to small businesses closure and leave their business and home in mixed use buildings.
- Missed rental payments will mean reduced income for landlords, who will not be able to upkeep their apartment buildings and cause more blight.
- Financial foreclosures and property tax delinquencies on all types of properties – residential, non-profit, apartments, commercial and industrial.
- Reduced tax base will mean increase in property taxes.
- PA realty agencies service the Waverly and Nichols areas, which creates gaps in MLS listings and sales inventory awareness. Similar situations occurs on all borders of Tioga County, except for Broome-Tioga.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Strategic Actions

- Encourage municipalities to focus code enforcement on absentee landlord properties to increase health, safety and quality of rental housing.
- Encourage municipalities to create housing rehabilitation programs via CDBG grant application to HCR.
- Educate current renters to move them along the life cycle continuum into home ownership.
- Work with the Tioga County Treasurer's Office to establish a screening criteria for properties up for auction to give serious developers and community re-investors first access.
- Raise awareness of impacts regarding bordering Realty Boards and the information gaps they create.
- Facilitate the creation of quality housing at higher price points to attract new residents and allow for trade up of current residents.

SCHOOLS

Decision Criteria:

- 2020-2021 seniors will matriculate through graduation.
- Meet vocational needs through more in-house programs.
- Maintain open schools; maintain school work force.

6 months

RECOVERY Impacts

- The 20% reduction in state aid will cause constrained budgets.
- Schools will likely run out of PPE (face masks and shields, gowns, thermometers, etc.) fairly quickly once they reopen and will need a source from which to restock quickly.
- If COVID-19 infection outbreaks occur in multiple school districts, Tioga County Public Health might get quickly overwhelmed with contact tracing, which will slow down either schools reopening, or at a minimum, students and staff returning to school.
- New professional development requirements and safety practices compliance related to COVID-19 have increased school district costs.
- Parents sending their children to other schools/school districts for 5 day schooling or delaying children's enrollment into kindergarten or homeschooling Kindergarteners has decreased public school district enrollment which decreases revenue.
- Exodus from NYS and local communities (NY taxes/ NY COVID-19 Response) will impact enrollment therefore impacting state aid.
- Many homes in local communities listed recently.
- Parents and guardians may need assistance with how to decide education methodology for their special needs children.
- Health insurance premium costs have increased 11.2%.

6 months

RECOVERY Strategic Actions

- Prepare next year budgets with staff layoffs, furloughs, and program cuts.
- When schools are down to 50% PPE stock they will alert the Tioga County Emergency Management Office to restock quickly; Tioga County EMO is being proactively alerted to the probable issue.
- Tioga County Public Health should have a back-up plan to receive assistance with contact tracing if necessary. This will be identified in the Human Services Committee Strategic Actions.
- School districts should utilize FEMA DR-4480 COVID-19 for reimbursement of COVID-19 related expenses including PPE and staff time out of work for quarantines.
- Cut public school district classes if enrollment decreases beyond the point of breaking even.
- Explore creating shared health insurance consortium to share premium costs between municipalities, county and school districts.
- Implement shared administration and management level services between districts to curb administration costs.
- Create a relocate from downstate mini-campaign.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Impacts

- Operations will change due to the current professional development/experiences/adjustments.
- Students / families may not have health insurance or primary care providers to conduct COVID-19 assessments.
- Hybrid in-person / distance education approach will not completely go away, which is not fiscally efficient or sustainable for public school districts.
- Tioga County economy is dependent on schools remaining open, as schools are the second largest employer in the County.
- If the pandemic-caused recession continues for 2-3 years, it may become necessary to re-district public school district boundaries in the County.
- BOCES costs are too high and are "pricing themselves out of the market".
- The lack of housing choices in Tioga County, coupled with conversion of older housing to rental occupancy, creates more student mobility, which causes lack of continuity and decrease in student enrollment.
- County Public Health Department will experience an influx in early intervention referrals due to cuts in public school districts preschool programs.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Strategic Actions

- Work with local hospitals to allow school district nurses to make referrals for COVID-19 tests for students without primary care providers via tele-medicine and get quicker testing results.
- Explore and direct parents to alternative early childhood education programs on TV and social media or YouTube.
- Schools keep in-person education the priority, with remote learning as just one small component of students overall education experience.
- Schools must keep daily infection rate under 9% as allowed by NYS Guidance to maintain in-person education and full workforce.
- A third-party study should be undertaken to assess options for redistricting of public school district boundaries and/or consolidation.
- Public school districts should share resources to offer vocational education programs and special education services.
- Reshape distance learning so districts can share teachers.
- County Public Health Department will need to increase early intervention resources to assess and service increased preschool special education children.
- Create a countywide marketing program that includes businesses and public school districts specialty programs.

TECHNOLOGY

Decision Criteria:

Provide 100% of addresses in Tioga County with robust, high-speed broadband and internet coverage.

6 months

RECOVERY Impacts

- The FCC broadband coverage data is aggregated by Census Tract, which is self-reported by telecommunications companies and furthermore uses just one address that has internet connection to infer coverage for the entire census tract. This results in misrepresentation of underserved areas nationwide.
- Tioga County's Fujitsu Market Assessment, which used FCC data plus other data sources, shows only 5% of addresses in Tioga County lack adequate internet access, defined as <100Mb per second.
- K-12 schools are looking for immediate solutions to lack of broadband coverage such as ipads with cellular services, issuance of chromebooks, and creating hot spots in their parking lots.
- Some school students not getting adequate remote education due to lack of internet coverage.
- Residents in unserved and underserved areas cannot work remotely.
- Residents in unserved and underserved areas cannot access healthcare services remotely.
- Farm businesses located in unserved and underserved areas cannot operate efficiently or expand.

6 months

RECOVERY Strategic Actions

- Work with Fujitsu to approve the design build out for the 5% of addresses that currently have no or inadequate access to the internet.
- Seek funding to implement the Fujitsu study to provide broadband and internet access in the 5% unserved and underserved areas (those with <100Mbps service).
- Implement the most cost effective study recommendations for last mile coverage.
- Educate parents and school students about the inadequacy of cellular service on phones for remote learning.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Impacts

- Broadband build-out design will start with the unserved and <100Mbps underserved internet areas.
- Build out to be designed in the upcoming Fujitsu study will be a long term project, dependent upon securing external funding.
- Working remotely due to required safety restrictions will result in new job opportunities, but those residing in unserved and underserved internet areas will not be able to take advantage of this kind of employment.
- Those located in unserved and underserved internet areas will still have to drive to every healthcare-related, in-person appointment, risking COVID-19 exposure.
- School students residing in unserved and underserved internet areas will struggle if their parents opted for remote learning, especially those with multiple children in the households, which requires further demand for internet services.
- Farms located in rural areas without the advantage of internet access to operate or expand their businesses will fall further behind in an already competitive market, and will risk closure.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Strategic Actions

- Improve broadband coverage in areas that have just one internet provider by encouraging telecommunications services competition in Tioga County.
- Residents throughout Tioga County will have the broadband capacity required to telecommute and therefore work from home.
- Residents throughout Tioga County will have the broadband capacity required to have a healthcare appointment via telemedicine or teleservices.
- Multiple school students in the same household will be learning remotely without any technological challenges to due improved countywide broadband coverage.
- Farms and other businesses throughout Tioga County will have the advantage of internet access to improve or expand their operations.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



Decision Criteria:

- Connect job seekers with meaningful long-term, local employment.
- Actions should be consistent with the career pipeline strategy outlined in the Tioga County Workforce Strategy.
- Help youth obtain long-term career opportunities versus short-term employment.
- Create an environment that allows businesses to be more resilient.

6 months

RECOVERY Impacts

- If schools have to close due to COVID-19 outbreaks, workers with children will be faced with childcare issues.
- Lack of Personal Protective Equipment availability.
- The Workforce Strategy indicated that employers have the greatest need of filling entry-level positions.
- Small businesses are the most in need of workers.
- Small businesses struggling to implement work from home policies and procedures.
- Uncertainty of regular incumbent workforce training funding sources for both WIB and colleges.
 - Workforce Investment Board paused Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act funding programs, which prevented people from engaging in short-term training/re-training programs during the last closures.
- Dwindling and even more uncertain On the Job (OJT) funding through the Tioga Career Center.
- Community college enrollment is not increasing with this pandemic, as typically happens with most economic downturns.

6 months

RECOVERY Strategic Actions

- Develop and implement various methods of conducting job fairs such as virtual, drive through, and one-on-one virtual job seekers / possible employers virtual informational meetings.
- Share Hot Job lists with Committee participants for greater outreach (Tioga Career Center Facebook page), including posting job availability on 211 list serves as applicable.
- Assess childcare needs of workforce, particularly at businesses and schools.
- Promote the New York State Department of Labor Apprenticeship Expansion Grant and assist businesses with application.
- Continue job seeker informational materials in paper format.
- Connect Committee Participating Agencies with BU SBDC's three business consulting programs – COVID-19 Recovery, eCommerce and Web business, and HR employee policies review + update.
- Increase Tioga County's access to Broome-Tioga Workforce's Metrics program that help job seekers improve technology skills.
- Continue and expand youth employment relationships with local school districts.
- Continue to use videos to educate youth on employment.
- Continue to optimize utilization of Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act funding among all participating Committee members.
- Seek funding to provide youth seeking employment opportunities with laptops or Chromebooks who don't have equipment but do have adequate internet access.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Impacts

- Older, unemployed workers will likely prefer OJT, certification or credentialing over going back to college.
- Older job seekers are less likely to be technology savvy.
- Could potentially experience a significant drop in the number of high-school and college graduates, as students could hold off on enrolling, or education institutions might not logistically be able to complete curriculum requirements.
- Tioga Career Center experience shows employers looking more for job / work experience rather than college degrees or vocational / technical certifications.
- If the SUNY incumbent workforce training to businesses is no longer available, businesses will have to look to other sources for the 90% cost contribution.
- Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship SUNY funding still available at the community college level.

1 year

REDEVELOPMENT Strategic Actions

- Utilize Appalachian Regional Commission funding available through ST8 and other federal ARC initiatives to address dwindling OJT funding, as well as career pipeline development.
- Secure other sources for incumbent workforce training funding if SUNY business grants go away and/or ask businesses to contribute more than 10%.
- County and WIB will still provide paper informational resources and in-person assistance for job seekers who don't have access to technology or have other access issues.
- Connect youth with disabilities who have also been involved in the justice system with employment opportunities, including career prep courses in lieu of serving jail time (i.e. Benay Rubenstein of College Initiative Upstate).
- Community Colleges need to conduct more promotion, be more flexible in times of course offerings, and offer more certificate and micro-credential programs; these changes would make it easier for working adults to enroll.
- Educate job candidates about communicating SUNY-branded badges and certificates.
- Committee participants will assess the training related placement data annually to evaluate micro-credentialing and certificate programs.
- Continue to optimize utilization of Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act funding among all participating Committee members.



IMPLEMENTATION

The Tioga County Strategic Planning Committee and Work Group participants will work together to complete the strategic actions listed in this Plan within the next six months to one year. It is the goal to position our businesses, communities, and services to sustain operations and be more resilient during any future economic disruptions.

TEAM Tioga will facilitate implementation of these strategic actions in partnership with the respective Committee or Work Group members. An Implementation Chart will be created to keep track and record progress on the identified strategic actions. Committee and Work Group members will update the Tioga Economic Recovery Advisory Council on accomplishments at regular meetings to be held every other month.

COMMON THEMES

Several actions were mentioned in most Committees including:

- HOUSING
- CHILDCARE
- BROADBRAND / INTERNET CONNECTION
- MARKETING / PROMOTION
- WORKFORCE RETENTION





TIOGA COUNTY ECONOMIC RECOVERY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TEAM Tioga would like to thank the Tioga County Economic Recovery Advisory Council for their guidance during this strategic planning process, and the Committee and Work Group members for their commitment during the development of this Strategic Plan.

Maureen Abbott	Tioga Opportunities, Inc.
Bradley Crews	Historic Owego Marketplace
Christine Curtis	TEAM Tioga
Jen Gregory	Southern Tier 8
Bob Griffin	Small Business Development Center
Megan Griffiths	TEAM Tioga
Andy Hafer	Tioga County Chamber of Commerce
Kelly Haynes	Spencer Agency
Abbey Hendrickson	TEAM Tioga
Elaine Jardine	TEAM Tioga
Gwen Kania	Tioga County Chamber of Commerce
Roger Katchuk	First Tioga Realty
Eric Knolles	Waverly Central School District
Marcel Lamb	NYS Department of Labor
Becca Maffei	TEAM Tioga
Lisa McCafferty	Tioga County Public Health
Dave Radigan	WEBO
Omar Sanders	Empire State Development
Marte Sauerbrey	Tioga County Legislature
LeeAnn Tinney	TEAM Tioga
Cameron VanNorman	Waverly Business Association
Wendy Walsh	Tioga County Soil & Water Conservation District
Jon Ward	Tioga State Bank
Dale Weston	Tioga County Legislature
Sue Williams	Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce
Brittany Woodburn	TEAM Tioga
Shawn Yetter	Tioga County Social Services
Jim Weed	Tioga Downs

Committees and Work Group Members

