

# FORWARD *together*

*Economic Resiliency Plan*

ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
 Regional population stagnation and population decline, combined with an aging workforce	 Continue to highlight the region’s quality of life as a major attractor to the region, including outdoor recreation, cultural, and lifestyle offerings, to attract workers to fill local jobs, as well as remote workers
 Other economic factors are further limiting the workforce pool	 Increase connections between schools (K-12) and the local business community, such as a regional apprenticeship/mentorship model
 Struggles recruiting workers limiting businesses’ potential to grow	 Explore new shared workforce models
 Pandemic resulted in technology uptake, permanently displacing workers that will need appropriate retraining for other opportunities	 Tap into populations that have not been traditionally well represented in the workforce.
 Inadequate transportation infrastructure further limits potential workforce pool and, for those with no other options, long distance commuting	 Highlight jobs’ growth potential and benefits.
 Increased demand for first and second homes in the region, combined with short-term rentals, have exacerbated housing affordability issues in the region	 Explore creative housing models, including CLTs and seasonal, transportable pod housing
 Broadband and cellular access are not sufficient, inhibiting businesses, remote schooling, telehealth, and remote workers	 Take advantage of the increased private sector demand for housing by requiring a portion be allocated for workforce housing
 Child care demand far exceeds supply, and the availability of child care continues to decline, with an aging out workforce, low income potential, and high start-up costs and regulatory hurdles	 Advocate regionally for broadband and cellular improvements, including innovative solutions
 Aging water and sewer infrastructure places additional financial burdens on municipalities faced with the decision of making the improvements, raising rates, and potentially driving out investment	 Be prepared with a pipeline of transformative infrastructure projects (broadband/cell, water/sewer, transportation, child care) for when funding is available
 Much of the region has no water and sewer infrastructure, stymieing larger scale investment, in addition to raising environmental/water quality concerns	 Support the agencies that are experts in the child care sector to strengthen their capacity
 Border closure has resulted in economic impacts in the northern portion of the region, including reduced tourism and reduced economic activity (e.g., site visits)	 Use business-provided child care as an a potential workforce attractor and explore potential new cooperative models to minimize costs to small businesses
	 Make use of Federal and State funding to address aging water and sewer infrastructure to support bringing new development and density to these areas
	 Support the strong rural entrepreneurship of the region through additional Stage 2/accelerator services
	 Continue and expand collaboration as a means to share ideas and resources, and work collaboratively as a region.
	 Support private sector in their efforts to regionalize relevant supply chain components where appropriate.

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SECTOR	ISSUES	OPPORTUNITIES
<b>Healthcare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The region faces chronic health issues and growing mental health needs that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.</li> <li>• Hospitals in the region have difficulty getting the attention and funding needed to upgrade aging hospital infrastructure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for shifting demand for new types of care, including new services and new models.</li> </ul>
<b>Agriculture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production costs continue to rise, with limited potential to raise prices for commodity products.</li> <li>• There is a shortage of meat processing facilities across the region and little incentive for existing operations to expand.</li> <li>• Limited borrowing capacity to invest in technology upgrades</li> <li>• Without succession plans, aging farmers are selling their land, resulting in a loss of agricultural land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tap into growing demand for locally produced products</li> <li>• Expand agritourism offerings</li> <li>• Grow new models of product delivery, including online sales and delivery CSAs</li> <li>• Increase processing facilities and explore improvements to meat processing regulations</li> <li>• Increase collaboration as a means to minimize costs and increase distribution</li> </ul>
<b>Retail &amp; Restaurants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing difficulty filling minimum wage service sector jobs</li> <li>• Hesitancy/lack of ability to fully embrace social media and/or online retail options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retain and grow the new markets and customers established over the past year</li> <li>• Invest in digital applications to allow businesses to continue operating with fewer employees</li> <li>• Better connect region's small businesses (retail, restaurants) to tourist destinations</li> <li>• Continue to build on retail density</li> </ul>
<b>Tourism (Hospitality, Destinations)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism demand and associated amenities are not evenly distributed throughout the region, causing overcrowded conditions in some areas and lack of customers/visitors in others</li> <li>• The shift to more impulse travel to the region is harder to plan and staff up for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pent up demand for entertainment offerings</li> <li>• Continue to develop innovative solutions to better connect the region's outdoor recreation destinations to downtowns and less frequented trails</li> <li>• Grow lodging offerings, including new models to meet shifting consumer preferences</li> <li>• Increase tourism diversity and the diversity of offerings to meet their needs</li> <li>• Extend the tourism season, working towards a year-round model</li> </ul>
<b>Manufacturing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Misperceptions about manufacturing jobs reduces potential workforce pool</li> <li>• Reduction in cross border activity diminishing the capacity to showcase and expand manufacturing clusters in the region.</li> <li>• There is a regional disconnect between demand and availability of turn-key manufacturing sites with infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand existing, established manufacturing clusters, including the transportation cluster in Clinton County and medical device cluster in Warren County</li> <li>• Increase growth potential manufacturers</li> <li>• Plan for growing downstream demand</li> </ul>