

Executive Summary

The Schoharie County economic development strategy provides a long-term approach for Schoharie County to support economic growth in the context of the conditions of the 21st Century economy. The strategy emerged through a variety of approaches to information gathering and analysis. These included analysis of quantitative data, mapping of spatial data through a Geographic Information System, and continual outreach to stakeholders and the general public, including over 30 interviews, meetings and focus groups to understand the issues and opportunities facing Schoharie County firms. The results of this work are reflected in the strategy and its goals and objectives.

The Strategy: Building a competitive advantage by supporting value-added activities

The overall premise and approach of this strategy is to position Schoharie County's economy so that it becomes a desirable location for businesses in each of the three regions in which it is located: the Albany Metro Area the Mohawk Valley and the Catskills/Appalachian region.

To do this, Schoharie County must support the ability of businesses in the County to add value to their enterprises. Firms that improve their ability to add value are able to participate in more types of economic activity. For example, extra value firms can generate for customers puts those firms in a better position to participate into existing value chains—the networks of buyers and suppliers that collaborate in delivering goods and services to end users—whether those value chains are found in the Mohawk Valley, the Albany MSA, Greater Central New York, or across the globe. The strategy addresses four factors that can affect the competitiveness of a local economy:

1. *Appropriate policies and regulations intended to create a conducive business environment.*
2. *Hard connectivity* that physically links businesses to sites with essential services of transportation communications, water and power.
3. *Soft connectivity linking organizations and people together to foster economic productivity and community quality of life.*
4. *Institutional capacity measured by shared leadership and vision, along with clear alignment of government institutions and strong public-private collaboration¹*

The Goals

From this framework come the strategy's goals—the broad purposes the strategy seeks to achieve. Under each goal is found its objectives—the specific activities that need to be completed in order to accomplish the goal. These goals and objectives are the foundation of the workplan detailed in the implementation section of the full report.

Goal 1. Building Institutional Capacity: Establish the Schoharie County Economic Development Organization and the Economic Alliance

Objective 1-1. Establish the Economic Development Organization.

Objective 1-2. Create the Schoharie County Economic Alliance.

¹ Adapted by Fairweather Consulting from *Competitive Cities and their Connections to Global Value Chains*. World Economic Forum, June 2016, p. 14.

Goal 2. Building hard connectivity: Prepare sites and workforce for development

Objective 2-1. Develop shovel ready sites.

Objective 2-2. Establish a strategic workforce development initiative for the County.

Objective 2-3. Create transformational incentives.

Goal 3. Building soft connectivity: Create networks of organizations to sustain growth

Objective 3-1. Establish a business retention and expansion (BR&E) program.

Objective 3-2. Support and, as necessary, lead cluster and sector-based initiatives in such areas as agriculture and food, tourism, and downtown business development.

Objective 3-3. Foster initiatives to improve quality of life and thereby talent retention and attraction throughout the county.

Objective 3-4. Lead tourism coordination and external marketing

Goal 4. Ensure effectiveness of local policies and regulations

Objective 4-1. Identify and address critical county-level policy and regulatory impediments.

Objective 4-2. Work with municipalities to address issues in local policies and regulations.

The Importance of Partnerships for Economic Success

The strategy calls for the creation of a Schoharie County Economic Development Organization to spearhead this effort. That organization must create and cultivate a network of partners. This diagram illustrates what such a network would look like.

The intent is to create a mechanism that is flexible, agile and responsive to the needs of businesses in the County.

It seeks to bring the public and private sectors into a partnership to enable Schoharie County to meet the economic challenges and opportunities it faces.

