

NEW YORK STATE'S NORTH COUNTRY

REGIONAL PLAN – 2017

(Updated January 2020)

Jefferson-Lewis Workforce Development Board

North Country Workforce Development Board

St. Lawrence County Workforce Development Board

January 2020



North Country Regional Plan Jefferson-Lewis, St. Lawrence and North Country

Introduction:

The three North Country Local Workforce Development Boards oversee workforce development activities in seven North Country counties, including:

- Jefferson-Lewis – Jefferson and Lewis counties
- North Country – Clinton, Essex, Franklin, and Hamilton counties
- St. Lawrence – St. Lawrence County

The same seven counties also comprise the seven-county region assigned to the North Country Regional Economic Development Council (NCREDC). This is a congruence between the territory served by both the NCREDC and the three Workforce Development Boards (WDB).

The North Country region constitutes approximately 23% of the New York State's land area and is home to approximately 2.23% of the state's population. In addition, the region has no population center where economic and workforce activities are focused within the region. Its two most populous cities, Plattsburgh and Watertown – include populations of about 20,000 and 27,000 respectively (2010) – are located approximately 160 miles apart; resulting in a three-hour drive to get from one city to the other (in good weather). Furthermore, about 11% of the region's population resides in its two major "population centers."

It is important to draw attention to these geographic and demographic realities because they make it difficult to do cohesive regional economic development planning, not to mention workforce planning and delivery, for the seven-county region. The NCREDC has struggled with this issue since its inception seven years ago i.e., how to adopt meaningful strategies that apply to the entire diverse and extended region and not just to small areas where the population clusters are located.

The region's three WDBs are aware of this challenge because all three WDBs' executive directors have been engaged in in the NCREDC and, in the case of two of them, since its implementation. The three directors serve on the NCREDC Workforce Committee. Additionally, the three executive directors also serve on other NCREDC task forces and work groups. In short, they are aware of the challenges the Council has had.

There are economic commonalities across the region – and the NCREDC has done its best to make the most of them. Dairy farming has a major presence in all but one of the seven counties; tourism is a major factor in all seven counties; and in all but Hamilton County, significant employment is still created by what is left from mines and rural resource-based manufacturing establishments (paper, lumber, and dairy products).

Notwithstanding this, the differences among the region’s counties – and even within the counties - are dramatic and make it difficult for the seven counties to engage in workforce development planning and implementation activities, even though the executive directors of the region’s three WDBs have been regularly meeting and working together on WIOA implementation and other workforce-related issues for the past three years.

Most recently, since each WDB’s Local Plan is part of the Regional Plan and since the labor market (see Appendix A) data in the area’s respective Local Plans is regional rather than county specific, the North Country’s three executive directors recommended to their respective Boards of Directors and Chief Elected Officials (CEO) that the first section of their respective 2017-2021 Local Plans have been reviewed for modifications. The executive directors worked with the NYS DOL’s regional economist to develop regional data that was included as well as with additional data developed from other sources.

Regional Service Strategies:

Staff and members of the region’s three WDB’s have examined the circumstances of the North Country region and have concluded that using cooperative service delivery agreements is not practical. Because of the region’s expanse (23% of NYS’ land mass) and the lack of a central community on which the economy and labor market focuses, the three areas cannot envision cooperative service delivery scenarios in which the inefficiencies generated by the region’s geography and demography don’t exceed the efficiencies attained.

NYS DOL recognizes these challenges. It serves the seven-county North Country region from eight offices and only among the three offices located in St. Lawrence County is there significant shared service delivery in place.

Sector Initiatives for In-Demand Sectors or Occupations:

As part of the preparation of the three WDB’s respective Local Plans, the region’s three WDB’s developed a common demand occupations list. The list focuses on occupations, not sectors, because of the region’s heterogeneous employer base. For example:

- There are paper mills in four counties, but not in the other three.
- Businesses focusing on supporting Ft. Drum in Jefferson County may also affect portions of neighboring Lewis and St. Lawrence counties but demand for such occupations in the rest of the region is non-existent.
- The four colleges located within 10 miles of each other in central St. Lawrence County create occupational demands whose only close parallel is a two-hour drive in Plattsburgh and Saranac Lake areas (each hosting two colleges).

The list – which can be accessed at: <http://www.labor.ny.gov/workforcenypartners/lwia/lwia-occs.shtm> – is a testament to the sub-regional differences that characterize the region’s employers’ skills demand but also demonstrates (as noted earlier) the overlapping in occupational demands among the three WDB’s. Examples of the latter include health care professions and tourism.

Collection and Analysis of Regional Labor Market Data:

As noted in both of the previous sections the three WDBs have relied on NYS DOL’s North Country regional labor market analyst, Mr. Anthony Hayden, who is based in Lake Placid. He has given his time and expertise and has continued the long-term collaboration between the region’s WDBs which pre-dates the creation of the regional councils.

As noted earlier, the three WDB’s executive directors have collaborated in their use of Mr. Hayden’s data in preparing their respective Local Plans. The four have forged a working collaboration, even though the data may show that collaboration to provide services based on that data is not practical to the region.

Regional Spending Plan:

WIOA states the Regional Plan should include “the establishment of administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate, for the region...” As in the case of regional service strategies as stated above, the staff and members of the region’s three WDB’s have examined the circumstances of the North Country region and have concluded the creation of a regional spending plan that includes administrative cost arrangements and pool funds is not appropriate at this time.

At the risk of being repetitious, the three WDB’s have concluded that creating a regional spending plan would not be practical due to differences in the way the three WDB’s deliver services and the variations in the customer base - especially among the employers - are so dramatic that pooling funds would defeat the purpose.

Coordination of Supportive Services:

WIOA states the Regional Plan should include “the coordination of transportation and other supportive services, as appropriate, for the region.” As explained above, the three WDB’s have concluded that such coordination is not appropriate – for reasons cited elsewhere in this document.

This is true for transportation. Given the lack of public transportation and other infrastructures that cross over county boundaries, it is not feasible to jointly provide transportation or other supportive services due to great distances within the region and decentralization of the population.

Coordination of Services with Economic Development Partners:

In WIOA, it says the regional plan should include “the coordination of services with regional economic development services and providers.” The three North Country WDBs already work closely with their local and county-level economic development services and providers.

Though there are many local and county-level development services and providers, there are fewer that cover the entire region. Aside from the NCREDC, there are only three other regional economic development service providers whose service territory covers the same seven counties of the region as the NCREDC. Those three organizations are:

- CITEC, Inc., the Regional Technology Development Organization for the region,
- North County Alliance (NCA)
- Workforce Development Institute (WDI)

CITEC provides training for manufacturing clients and all three WDBs use its services when appropriate. Meanwhile, the training CITEC does focuses on upgrade and management training and generally there are fewer opportunities to use WIOA funds for such training because the employees to be trained are ineligible for WIOA assistance. The three WDB's collaborate with CITEC in other areas.

An example of this is their cooperation with CITEC in holding National Manufacturing Day events for high school students and guidance counselors at local manufacturing facilities across the North Country. This year's event, held on October 13, was the fifth edition of the program.

The NCA is a seven-county economic development organization which started as a trade association of the region's economic developers in the mid 1980s. Since then, it has expanded its membership to include bank and business membership. One of the region's WDBs already participates in the NCA's activities as the St. Lawrence County WDB executive director is the chairman of the NCA's Loan Review Committee. Moreover, he previously served as the NCA's president for more than 10 years. Since the NCA has for the last few years been expanding beyond its trade association roots, it is time for the other two North Country WDB's to join the organization. The executive directors of both the Jefferson-Lewis and North Country WDB's plan to become members of the NCA shortly.

Lastly, the WDBs also work in close collaboration with WDI as it funds training and education activities such as Manufacturing Day, Business and Education Forum, and Adirondack P-Tech. The WDI also participates in the activities of the NCREDC's Workforce Committee,

Examples of WDI's collaboration with the WDBs include:

- The Medical Academy of Science and Health (MASH) Camp in Jefferson and Lewis counties;
- Their participation in the Workforce Development Councils in Clinton, Essex, Franklin and Hamilton counties; and
- The WDI's recent commitment of training funds to help Titan Mining restart the Balmat zinc mine in St. Lawrence County;

In addition to continuing their collaboration with CITEC, WDI, and the NCA, as well as with their local economic development partners, the three WDBs will continue to work with the NCREDC. As mentioned in the Introduction to this Regional Plan, the three WDB Directors have been involved with the NCREDC from its inception.

Performance Accountability Measure Negotiation and Reporting:

It is not surprising that the North Country's three WDB's are consistent when they say that they have conferred on how they can "collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Governor on local levels of performance for, and report on, the performance accountability measures described in section

116(c), for local areas or the planning region” and that they determined, given the diversity of the region, the distances and the diffuse labor market, it is not feasible to have common performance accountability measures that apply to the seven counties.

This Local Plan proposes to develop meaningful accountability data in the North Country by continuing to apply the measures to the three WDB’s as is currently the practice. In other words, the North Country WDB’s choose the WIOA approved option to develop local levels of performance for each of the region’s three local areas and not for the region as a whole.

The three WDB’s will also continue their long-standing practice of conferring about how benchmarks for the new performance standards prescribed by WIOA should be developed and whether there should be symmetry among them as they are applied to the regions’ WDB’s. In spite of the WDB’s insistence that the region is too large, too decentralized and too diverse to permit them to adopt meaningful regional service strategies, sector initiatives, spending plans, and coordinated support services, the seven counties DO have many things in common when it comes to performance measures.

This is true when for key economic benchmarks such as high unemployment, aging workforce and low household incomes. In spite of considerable variety across the seven counties, the three WDB’s will continue to consult with each other to influence the Governor in recognizing the region’s counties are intensely rural and that performance measures and benchmarks designed with big city-focused regions in mind do not apply fairly or meaningfully to rural counties like those in the North Country.

APPENDIX A

Labor Market Profile

Resident Civilian Labor and Nonfarm Employment

NORTH COUNTRY REGION

November 2019

Category	Nov. 2019	Net Year	% Year
Resident Civilian Labor Force	174,900	-1,200	-0.7%
Employed	166,700	-1,800	-1.1%
Unemployed	8,100	+500	6.6%
North Country Region Unemployment Rate	4.7	Unavailable	
NYS Unemployment Rate	3.6%	-0.2	
US Unemployment Rate	3.3%	unavailable	
Total Nonfarm	161,300	1,800	1.1%
Total Private	112,300	1,500	1.4%
Goods-producing	17,700	100	1.4%
Natural Resources, Mining & Construction	7,300	-100	1.4%
Manufacturing	10,400	100	0%
Service-Providing	143,600	1,700	1.2%
Private Service-Providing	94,600	1,400	1.5%
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	28,200	300	1.1%
Information	1,800	0	0.0%
Financial Activities	3,900	-100	-2.5%
Professional & Business Services	8,000	200	2.6%
Education & Health Services	30,200	300	1%
Leisure & Hospitality	15,500	400	2.6%
Other Services	7,000	200	2.9%
Government	49,000	300	0.6%

ATTACHMENT A-1

Signature of Chief Elected Official(s) NORTH COUNTRY REGION

In compliance with the provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, the Final Rule, and Planning guidelines and instructions developed by the Governor, this Regional Plan is being submitted jointly by the Jefferson-Lewis Workforce Development Board, North Country Workforce Development Board and St. Lawrence County Workforce Development Board and their respective Chief Elected Official(s).

By virtue of my signature, I:

- Agree to comply with all statutory and regulatory requirement of the Act as well as other applicable State and Federal laws, regulations, and policies;
- Affirm that the Grant recipient possesses the capacity to fulfill all responsibilities and assume liability for funds received, as stipulated in §679.420 of the rules and regulations;
- Affirm that the composition of the Local Board is either in compliance with the law, rules and regulations and is approved by the State or, will be in compliance within 90 days of Regional Plan submission;
- Affirm that the Chair of the Local Board was duly elected by that Board; and
- Affirm that the Board, including any staff to the Board, will not directly provide any career services unless approved to do so by the Chief Elected Official

Signature of the Local Chief Elected Official (CEO)
Jefferson County

Date

Name: Mr. Scott A. Gray
Title of Local CEO: Chair, Jefferson County
Address: 195 Arsenal St
Watertown, NY 13601
Phone: 315 785-3075
E-mail: scottg@co.jefferson.ny.us

Are you the Grant Recipient CEO?

Yes ___

No ___

ATTACHMENT A - 2

Signature of Chief Elected Official(s) NORTH COUNTRY REGION

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Signature of the Local Chief Elected Official (CEO)
Lewis County

Date

Name: Mr. Michael Tabolt
Title of Local CEO: Chair, Lewis County
Address: 7660 N State St
Lowville, NY 13367
Phone: 315-376-5355
E-mail: terryclark@lewiscounty.ny.us

Are you the Grant Recipient CEO? Yes ___ No x

ATTACHMENT A - 3

Signature of Chief Elected Official(s) NORTH COUNTRY REGION

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Signature of the Local Chief Elected Official (CEO)
Clinton County

Date

Name: Mr. Harry McManus
Title of Local CEO: Chair, Clinton County
Address: 137 Margaret St.
Plattsburgh, NY 12901
Phone: 518-563-4600
E-mail: harrymcmanus@gmail.com

Are you the Grant Recipient CEO?

Yes _x_

No

ATTACHMENT A - 4

Signature of Chief Elected Official(s) NORTH COUNTRY REGION

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Signature of the Local Chief Elected Official (CEO)
Essex County

Date

Name: Mr. Randy Preston
Title of Local CEO: Chair, Essex County
Address: 7551 Court St.
Elizabethtown, NY 12932
Phone: 518-873-3350
E-mail: randypreston@townofwilmington.org

Are you the Grant Recipient CEO? Yes ___ No x

ATTACHMENT A - 5

Signature of Chief Elected Official(s) NORTH COUNTRY REGION

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Signature of the Local Chief Elected Official (CEO)
Franklin County

Date

Name: Ms. Barbara Rice
Title of Local CEO: Chair, Franklin County
Address: 355 W. Main St.
Malone, NY 12953
Phone: 518-481-1640
E-mail: legislatorrice@gmail.com

Are you the Grant Recipient CEO? Yes ___ No x

ATTACHMENT A - 6

Signature of Chief Elected Official(s) NORTH COUNTRY REGION

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Signature of the Local Chief Elected Official (CEO)
Hamilton County

Date

Name: Mr. William Farber
Title of Local CEO: Chair, Hamilton County
Address: 102 Co. Rd. 11
Lake Pleasant, NY 12108
Phone: 518-548-6651
E-mail: chairman@hamiltoncountyny.gov

Are you the Grant Recipient CEO? Yes ___ No x

ATTACHMENT A - 7

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Signature of the Local Chief Elected Official (CEO)
St. Lawrence County

Date

Name: Mr. Kevin Acres
Title of Local CEO: Chair, St. Lawrence County
Address: 48 Court St.
Canton, NY 13617
Phone: 315-379-2276
E-mail: kacres@stlawco.org

Are you the Grant Recipient CEO?

Yes ___

No ___

ATTACHMENT B - 1

Signature of WDB Chairs NORTH COUNTRY REGION

In compliance with the provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, the Final Rule, and Planning guidelines and instructions developed by the Governor, this Regional Plan is being submitted jointly by the Jefferson-Lewis Workforce Development Board, North Country Workforce Development Board and St. Lawrence County Workforce Development.

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Matthew Cooper, Chair, Jefferson-Lewis WDB
Senior Managing Engineer
Barton and Loguidice, DPC
120 Washington St, suite 201
Watertown, NY 13601
mcooper@bartonloguidice.com
315-701-9810

Date

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John Vermette, Chair, North Country WDB
Plant Manager
Spencer-ARL
31 Area Development Dr.
Plattsburgh, NY 12901
jvermette@spencerarl.com
518-324-3255

Date

ATTACHMENT B - 3

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Mr. Lynn Belvins, SLCWDB Chair
St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators
48 Court St., Canton, NY 13617
lynn.blevins@teamblevins.com
315-379-2276

Date

ATTACHMENT C - 1

Signature of WDB Executive Directors NORTH COUNTRY REGION

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Cheryl Mayforth
Executive Director, Jefferson-Lewis WDB
1000 Coffeen St
Watertown, NY 13601
c.mayforth@co.jefferson.ny.us
315-786-3646

Date

ATTACHMENT C - 1

Signature of WDB Executive Directors NORTH COUNTRY REGION

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Sylvie Nelson
Executive Director, North Country WDB
194 US Oval
Plattsburgh, NY 12903
snelson@ncworkforce.com
518-561-4295 ext. 3075

Date

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Barb Lashua
Executive Director, St. Lawrence County WDB
19 Commerce Lane
Canton, NY 13617
blashuaslcwdb@gmail.com
315-379-9806

Date