

## **Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council Launches Economic Recovery Effort**

The Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council (G/FLRPC) recently announced the launch of an economic development initiative to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This will allow GFLRPC to enhance the economic resiliency of the region, which includes Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming and Yates Counties, with a combined population of approximately 1.2 million people in 90 cities, towns and villages.

According to G/FLRPC Executive Director Jay Gsell, the initiative is funded by the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) and will focus on supporting economic recovery at the community level. It will enhance G/FLRPC's existing work and involvement with state and federal officials in coordinating the response to the evolving pandemic and its extensive impacts throughout the Finger Lakes region.

"In our role to support regional economic development planning, we serve as the region's EDA Economic Development District, and have actively pursued state and federal support for economic development initiatives since 1974," Gsell stated.

"Unlike any challenge that has come before, the COVID-19 crisis has stretched resources, including those supporting economic development," he said. However, a recent infusion of funding through the CARES Act has allowed GFLRPC to engage help from the local municipal service team at MRB Group, led by its Economic Development Director, Michael N'dolo. N'dolo will represent G/FLRPC as the Economic Recovery Coordinator to the entire region and help G/FLRPC's constituent communities in their adaptive response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The goal," said Gsell, "is to create a path towards recovery and to help our communities find the resources they need to move forward on that path. It is our hope that, with effective research, planning and communication, we can strengthen our region by sharing information on best practices for recovery, resiliency and growth. We also want to make sure our communities are fully aware of all the resources that are available to them to aid in the recovery effort."

To lead the project, Gsell and the staff at G/FLRPC looked for an experienced economic development consultant that would provide the critical outreach, technical assistance and economic planning services necessary to help the region pivot in the face of COVID-19. "We are pleased to work with MRB Group and Michael N'dolo," said Gsell. "He is a respected economic development professional who is known throughout the state for his expertise and thought leadership. His engagement with local leaders will bring the benefits of economic development planning directly into the communities we serve," Gsell said.

"We are proud to play a significant role in such an important endeavor," said N'dolo. "Not only is this an opportunity to work closely with the G/FLRPC's team and develop strategies that make sense," he continued, "but also to directly help our local governments adapt and meet this challenge in ways that will truly make a difference for people. Economic recovery will take time and will require engagement with local government, businesses, non-profit organizations, and community residents," he said.

According to Gsell, the economic recovery work under this program is funded for at least the next 18 months and will evolve as local and national conditions change. "Ideas for how to program the consultant's time are already flowing in from our stakeholders," he said. "There have been issues raised

about many topics, including childcare, broadband quality, supply chain disruptions and workforce training, just to name a few. We will identify the top priorities and get MRB Group working on those right away, but knowing that priorities may shift in the future to other areas.”

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