



Economic Recovery Coordinator Project

## Summary of Stakeholder Survey Responses

January 8, 2021

In early December, G/FLRPC issued a request for information to economic development organizations across the G/FL region. A total of 11 responses were received to date for Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Yates, Wayne, and Wyoming counties, as well as the City of Rochester and Greater Rochester Enterprise (GRE).

This survey has informed us of the most pressing challenges facing G/FL constituent communities, and this information will focus our work in the months ahead. Several common issues were identified by respondents, revealing these high-need focus areas:

- Broadband: Almost every respondent noted broadband availability in unserved and underserved areas as being a priority.
- Workforce Development: Many respondents included workforce development topics, such as the middle skills gap, apprenticeships, remote trainings, local school district alignment, and attracting remote workers to the region.
- Child Care: Many respondents also noted childcare availability, cost, and reliability as priorities for the region.

In terms of current resources and planning, multiple communities have already implemented various COVID-specific programs and resources, including technical assistance, PPE sourcing, funding opportunities, and reopening guidance.

In general, we found variability across the region related to response efforts, some of which could be explained by the varied level of impacts of the pandemic. We also note that many counties are in the process of updating their strategic plan to incorporate recovery and resilience efforts going forward.

What follows is more detail about responses to the survey, and attached is a full compilation of survey responses.

## Information Request Answers

### Plans and Strategies

- What is your community's most recent economic development strategy?
- Has your community adopted any COVID-19-specific economic recovery plans?

Of the 11 respondents, five indicated that they are undergoing updates to current economic development strategic plans to incorporate COVID-19 recovery strategies. Three communities, Genesee, Monroe, and Seneca counties, are already implementing COVID-specific recovery plans:

- In Genesee County, the Genesee County Economic Recovery Task Force has created a "6 Prong Economic Recovery Plan" that outlines six elements of their recovery strategy including 1) access to capital, 2) business attraction, 3) economic driver "connections," 4) activate workforce development, 5) placemaking and downtown development, and 6) housing.
- Monroe County has established loan programs funded through the County of Monroe IDA (COMIDA), the Monroe County Industrial Development Corporation (MCIDC), and the CARES Act. These programs, Monroe County Loan Fund and Fast Forward Monroe, have collectively allocated over \$16 million in loans to businesses impacted by the pandemic.
- Seneca County IDA has also established a revolving loan fund to provide emergency assistance to small and medium sized business impacted by COVID-19.

Other counties have made various COVID recovery resources available online in lieu of a formally adopted plan. These resources include guidelines for businesses reopening, COVID-19 local case tracking, and available state and federal funding opportunities.

### Programs and Resources

- Has your community created any COVID-19-specific recovery programs or resources?
- What programs and resources (other than the above) do you typically refer your businesses and municipalities to with respect to COVID-19 recovery and resilience?
- Are you aware of any "best practices" programs or resources that other communities have implemented that we could bring to the Genesee Finger Lakes region?

Many of the COVID-specific recovery programs identified here have already been included in the responses mentioned in the previous section (see above). In terms of COVID-specific resources, communities are providing comprehensive information on reopening rules, travel guidelines, essential business definitions, and funding opportunities. Other findings:

- One example of a specific program is the Visit Confidently Resource Center, a program of the Ontario County Economic Development Corporation and Finger Lakes Visitors Connection. Support from the Visit Confidently Resource Center includes PPE sourcing, customer friendly mask and social distancing signage, financial assistance for HVAC system assessments, a series of informational webinars, and trainings.

- Many EDOs within the G/FL region provided guidance and assistance to impacted businesses on securing Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) and Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans. Constituent businesses are also typically referred to the state’s New York Forward Loan Fund.
- Five out of the 10 respondents did not report COVID-specific recovery programs at this time.

Respondents also identified examples of “best practices” that other communities have implemented. Site selection and strategic investing in infrastructure were identified as potential tools for economic recovery in the G/FL Region. GRE identified the use of virtual site visits to market shovel-ready sites, with such work having shown initial signs of success in other communities. There is also an opportunity for virtual workforce events and tradeshow to market the G/FL Region as an attractive place for remote workers.

### Topics and Priorities

In addition to certain pre-identified topics, the following were identified by respondents to the survey as areas of interest:

- Housing availability and the “cost gap”
- Growth potential from incentivizing increased quality and quantity of housing
- Methods for housing growth and implications for talent retention and attraction
- Broadband in underserved/unserved areas
- Agricultural impacts
- Cellular service development – microcells
- Emerging issues
- Public transportation
- Education
- Vaccine public health relations plan
- Stop-gap funding in lieu of/until federal aid
- Employee/employer work issues and opportunities
- Local retail – reinvestment and adapting to an on-demand world
- Post-COVID real estate
- Impact on brick-and-mortar retail
- Suburbanization in rural areas
- Repurpose office/business parks
- Impact on local tax base
- Building sustainability in agriculture and food networks and promoting local processing
- Attracting remote workers
- Cybersecurity
- Supply chain disruptions and local resources

### Open-Ended Questions

1. If the team held one or more “roundtable” discussions via Zoom, which topics do you think would be most appealing for your communities?

Respondents suggested the following topics: broadband, workforce development, access to capital, changing retail environment, changing nature of real estate, and the future of brick-and-mortar retail.

2. Are there any topics that you might want a “white paper” written about?

Several topics identified here overlap from previous questions, including broadband and the digital divide, access to capital, the changing nature of real estate, workforce development, childcare, and remote learning.

Other topics respondents suggested included outdoor infrastructure, retail sector analysis, office sector analysis, equitable and inclusive opportunity to rebuild, and strategies to restore consumer confidence. Alternative energy and public-private partnerships were also suggested by more than one community.

3. Would any of the topics benefit from a broadly-disseminated survey to get more details on the on-the-ground conditions in each community?

Two communities identified childcare availability and affordability as a potential survey topic. Additionally, many of the common responses overlapped with previous answers including broadband availability. One respondent noted a potential issue of survey fatigue and suggest a hard-data driven focus on real estate transactions, GIS mapping, and labor market trends.

4. Are there any other types of stakeholder engagement/education that would be helpful in this effort?

One respondent suggested G/FL training workshops for business models that have successfully adapted to changing market realities stemming from COVID. These workshops could potentially be used for PB/ZBA credit hours.