FOSTERING LEADERSHIP IN THE CFSCNY REGION

AN ASSESSMENT OF OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES, SUMMARY REPORT

PREPARED FOR: Community Foundation for South Central New York
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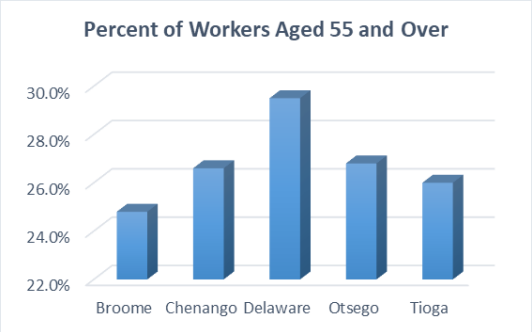
Executive Summary

The Community Foundation for South Central New York (CFSCNY) contracted with Horn Research to conduct a regional assessment of the barriers preventing and potential strategies to address a potential impending leadership gap and issues with diversity, inclusion, and equity in leadership, and their impact on workforce and economic development. Through a series of primary data collection efforts and a review of secondary data, several overarching themes emerged around each of these areas.

Leadership Gap

Secondary data and interviews support the premise that the region's pipeline for new leaders will be insufficient to meet organizations' future needs. Information from The Agency's Workforce Analysis in November of 2016 suggested there will be a regional need for 120 new top executives between 2012 and 2022 and Census data show that approximately 25-30% of the current workforce in the CFSCNY region is close to a traditional retirement age.



Respondents noted several challenges that have contributed to the leadership gap.

Generational Differences

A key barrier preventing a leadership pipeline are differences in generational priorities, attitudes, and understanding. The variations between generations in terms of work-life balance and values and differing expectations as to how and when leadership positions are attained result in a lack of trust between generations.

Community Environment

The cultural and recreational environment of their community negatively impacts organizations' ability to attract and retain leaders. In addition, the generational divide can affect the environment within an organization and the community as a whole. A resistance to change and conservative orientation deters younger professionals from staying in the area.

Inadequate Leadership

A lack of planning and knowledge by current leaders has affected the creation of a pipeline. Some "old guard leaders" have been hesitant to provide opportunities for training or mentoring.

Detached Networks

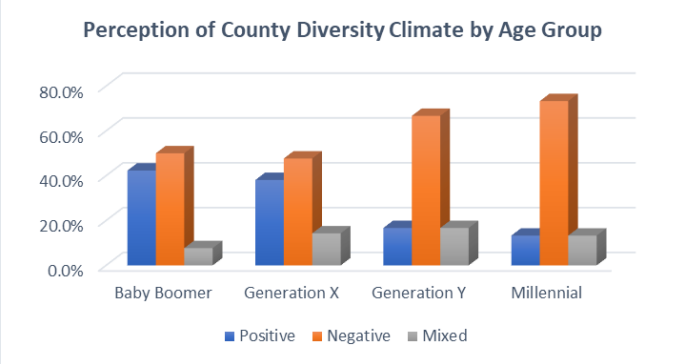
The lack of overlapping networks within their communities result in missed opportunities for linking potential leaders to available leadership positions.

Lack of Learning Opportunities

The combination of a lack of opportunities available for potential young leaders, a lack of mentorship from older professionals, and a lack of a clear ladder to greater leadership responsibility are significant barriers to creating a pipeline for new leaders.

Diversity, Inclusion & Equity

When asked about the climate and culture of their community with respect to diversity, inclusion, and equity, there was a distinct difference in response based on age group. Older respondents were more likely to have a positive view of the community's climate than were younger respondents.

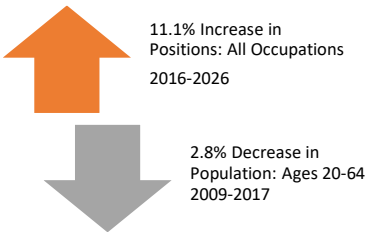


The most frequently offered assessment respondents gave of their community's diversity climate is that while diversity may be improving, active inclusion still needs more work. Respondents offered several insights into the barriers preventing diversity, inclusion and equity in leadership positions in the county.

Population Size	Population size was the most commonly cited barrier to diversity in leadership, however, secondary data suggest that leaders in the CFSCNY region leaders are not representative of the racial and gender diversity in the population.
Bias	Issues of bias exist in communities which create challenges to diversity, equity, and inclusion in leadership roles.
Old Guard Control	A barrier to achieving diversity and equity in leadership positions is the so-called old guard of primarily white, upper class, and older citizens who continue to hold onto control.
Cultural Environment	The insular culture of communities presents a barrier to diversity and inclusion. The more rural counties in particular noted that their communities were closed to outsiders.
Detached Networks	The lack of overlapping networks is a barrier to achieving diversity in leadership positions. Socio-economic status is a significant barrier to accessing leadership opportunities.

Workforce

Data from the New York State Department of Labor and the Census Bureau show an increasing gap between in the region's working age population and the projected number of jobs. When asked what kinds of workforce gaps exist in their county, a common refrain among respondents was that there are many jobs available, but not enough workers.



Respondents were asked to describe the primary reasons jobs are going unfilled and what issues might be preventing workers from becoming employed.

Infrastructure	Transportation is a significant barrier to employment, particularly for lower-income workers. Access to transportation is considered an issue for all the counties in the CFSCNY region. The lack of affordable child care is an additional barrier to employment for all income levels and a lack of housing options is a challenge in attracting workers to the region.
Wages	Low wages are a barrier to employment for lower-skilled workers who may not be able to afford to pay for transportation and childcare. For higher skill positions, low wages may prevent professionals from relocating to the area from larger metropolitan areas.
Drug Testing	Drug testing is a significant barrier for some people who might otherwise wish to join the workforce. Testing criteria which include recreational marijuana use are of particular concern.
Communication	Employers aren't effectively informing potential workers of open positions and opportunities for on-the-job training. Local organizations are not recruiting at the universities early or often enough to recruit professional level employees.

Economic Development

Respondents noted several barriers to economic development in their respective counties.

Leadership Gap	Respondents most frequently said that their county lacked leadership and vision around economic development which is exacerbated by a lack of coordinated efforts between localities and a lack of investment.
Workforce	A key barrier to economic development is the lack of sufficient workforce
Infrastructure	A lack of sufficient and appropriate housing is a barrier to economic development in the region as is transportation, and utilities.
Community Environment	A lack of cultural and recreational amenities as well as walkable spaces that are visually appealing limit economic development.
Taxes & State Model	High taxes and over-regulation are significant barriers to economic development in the region and the state's economic development model discourages collaboration which is a significant hurdle to county efforts.
Community Self-Perception	Respondents nearly universally felt that a community's self-perception has a significant impact on whether and how a community moves forward, noting that a negative self-perception is particularly damaging. The bulk of respondents said their community's self-perception was negative, but a large portion also noted that it was improving.

Recommendations

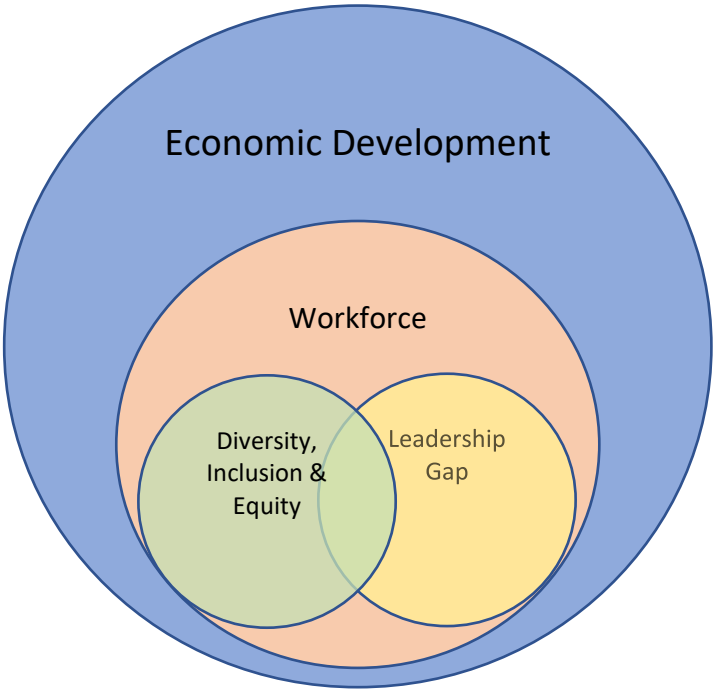
The interviews conducted for this project provided rich ground for the identification of barriers and opportunities for improvement in four areas: leadership, diversity, workforce, and economic development. Through this process, several areas have been identified where CFSCNY and other organizations could have a positive impact on key elements of regional economic development.

- Engage intentional efforts to bridge siloed networks to address the leadership gap and increase leadership diversity;
- Provide real-world, effective leadership training around generational and cultural differences;
- Develop meaningful mentorship opportunities;
- Facilitate community conversations around generational differences and diversity, inclusion, and equity;
- Encourage and support collaborative approaches to transportation, housing, and childcare;
- Support efforts to revisit drug-testing and criminal conviction criteria;
- Intentional and coordinated messaging to widely share stories of success and build momentum around community pride.

Introduction

In early 2019, the Community Foundation for South Central New York (CFSCNY) contracted with Horn Research to conduct an assessment of the counties[1] in the region they serve exploring the existence of an impending leadership gap and challenges with diversity, inclusion, and equity in leadership, and the impact those challenges may have on workforce and economic development.

The working premise of the project framework was that diversity, inclusion & equity and the impending leadership gap are key components to having a sufficient and robust workforce which is, in turn, critical to economic development. Clearly, other factors, such as transportation, education, housing, and childcare are critical for ensuring an adequate workforce and healthy economic development, however, each of these areas have been robustly examined in other assessments. In contrast, diversity, inclusion & equity has not been sufficiently explored to identify local assets and challenges. Anecdotal information suggests that challenges in this area hamper local organizations' abilities to create and maintain a sufficient workforce and ensure healthy management and oversight. In addition, anecdotal information suggests that the region is facing an impending leadership gap, particularly for non-profit organizations, with an increasing number of baby boomers retiring and a lack of "ready-to-lead" executives in the pipeline.



Methodology

To test the working premise and develop a comprehensive methodology, Horn Research conducted preliminary interviews with eight key informants. The interviews were semi-structured and allowed the opportunity for interviewees to provide alternate theories of change as well as identify key assets, challenges, and potential solutions. The results of the preliminary interviews were used to develop a structured interview guide (Appendix A).

Using the structured interview guide, Horn Research conducted interviews with 53 stakeholders. Stakeholders included staff and board members from key education, non-profit, funding, governmental and private organizations across CFSCNY's five county region. In addition, a focus group was conducted with young professionals serving children and families in Broome County and an online questionnaire was distributed to CFSCNY's Young Professionals Advisory Committee (Appendix B).

The telephone interviews were led by an experienced facilitator with participant responses captured in real-time through verbatim note-taking. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. All participants received a summary of the purpose of the project at the beginning of the interview and the facilitator read a statement verifying the confidentiality of the information collected.

[1] Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego and Tioga counties in New York

After the telephone interviews, focus groups and online questionnaires were completed, Horn Research analyzed the information by identifying, coding, and categorizing primary patterns in the data. The consistent patterns found in the analysis of the data supports the validity of the information gathered but should not be assumed to be *statistically* representative of the whole population. The information was coded and analyzed to identify barriers and gaps as well as assets and potential solutions.

In addition to the interviews, Horn Research identified secondary indicators and metrics to help define the current environment.

Respondent Selection

Respondents for the telephone interviews were selected by CFSCNY with the goal of including individuals from a variety of viewpoints, experiences, and backgrounds.

Table 1. Respondent Demographic Information[2]

Characteristic	Number	Percent
Age Group		
Baby Boomer	21	31%
Generation X	18	27%
Generation Y	9	13%
Millennial	19	28%
Race/Ethnicity		
People of Color	9	13%
White	45	67%
Unknown	13	19%
Gender		
Female	37	55%
Male	21	31%
Unknown	9	13%
County		
Broome	36	54%
Chenango	2	3%
Delaware	3	4%
Otsego	3	4%
Tioga	5	7%
Rural/Regional	4	6%
Unknown	14	21%

[2] Demographic information from the focus group participants was not collected and was therefore not included in this data. Where available, demographic information from the questionnaire completed by the Young Professional Advisory Group was included.

Leadership Gap

Is there a gap?

When asked whether there is a lack of leaders in the pipeline to take over, the majority of respondents (71%) said yes. Baby boomer and millennial respondents were most likely to say there was an impending leadership gap while Generation Y respondents were most likely to say there are enough leaders ready to take over.

Table 2. Percent of Respondents by Reply and Age Group

Generation	Gap in Leaders	No Gap	Undecided
Baby Boomer	76%	19%	5%
Generation X	67%	19%	14%
Generation Y	50%	50%	0%
Millennial	79%	16%	5%
All respondents	71%	22%	7%

Of the respondents who said there is no pending leadership gap, it was noted that if organizations were to plan properly and allow for a new mindset, there would be a sufficient number of people able to move into positions. One respondent said, *"Leaders being ready has a different definition than it had twenty years ago. There are certainly some gaps, but I think it's a matter of making sure that there are resources and support and mentorship. It's maybe not the old, white guys being the leaders, it's the [people in their] 30's that may be a little greener, but have good experience."* Another said, *"As the director of this organization for ten years, I've always been working on finding a 20-something to step-in. In 2011, we hired someone, she's a deputy director, and she's well-positioned to step-in to my role. There's this conversation that as the population declining, young people are moving away, but I seem to have my fingers on the pulse of several 20-year-olds and 30-year-olds that are here. I think people have gotten so comfortable with the conversation, they don't think about it [critically]."* Another respondent remarked, *"I do think there are people to move into the leadership positions. I think what may have changed is the volume of applicants that organizations are getting and the face of the leaders that organizations are getting with respect to gender and race. Unfortunately, some people characterize that as a shallow pool."*

Respondents who indicated the gap was real and significant suggested there are challenges in various areas. One respondent said non-profits in particular have difficulty hiring leaders. She said, *"If we think of some of the vacant executive director positions in this community, or just leadership positions in general, there seems to be a challenge in filling those positions. I know for our organization, we have an enormous bench strength issue that we've been working on and building up in the past year. I'm not confident that today that we're in a position for an internal candidate to take over the director role should something change. We have one, and she's not at the point in her life where she'd like to do that. That leaves a leadership gap. I think we see that throughout Broome County, especially in the non-profit space."*

Another respondent remarked on a lack of people stepping into volunteer positions. One respondent said, *"I'm feeling there are different categories. I think for some of the larger organizations, I do see young people interested and involved. But for something like youth sports, parent-teacher associations, or school booster clubs, it's getting harder and harder to get people to step up and do the work to keep it going. I can see a shift in the number of parents really willing to take the time and run something. There*

are plenty of people who want their kids in it and want to reap the benefits of what's being done, but they're just not interested in making it happening."

Other respondents noted the sheer number of people who are and will be retiring over the next few years cross all sectors and job levels will affect the availability of leaders. One respondent said, *"It's a high-level concern at this point in time. We're seeing about 30% of the workforce will be retiring. That leaves a pretty significant gap across all industry sectors. It's not hitting one specifically harder than the other. And that's been confirmed by the employers."*

Data support the concern about a current and future leadership gap. A search of the BroomeIsGood.com job posting aggregator found 473 positions with "manager" in the title and eight executive leadership positions were currently available.[3] In addition, information from The Agency's Workforce Analysis in November of 2016 suggested there will be a regional need for 120 new top executives between 2012 and 2022.[4] And Census data show that approximately 25-30% of the current workforce in the CFSCNY region is close to a traditional retirement age.

Table 3. Percent of Workers by Age Group and County[5]

County	Percent of Workers		
	Aged 55 to 59	Aged 60 and over	Aged 55 and over
Broome	11.6%	13.2%	24.8%
Chenango	13.0%	13.6%	26.6%
Delaware	11.6%	17.9%	29.5%
Otsego	11.4%	15.4%	26.8%
Tioga	13.3%	12.7%	26.0%

Barriers Preventing Pipeline

Interview participants were asked to describe the main challenges and barriers that may be preventing professionals from being available to move into leadership roles in the community.

Generational differences

The most commonly noted reasons for a lack of a leadership pipeline are differences in generational priorities, attitudes, and understanding. Respondents remarked on the variations between generations in terms of work-life balance and values. A baby boomer respondent said, *"In the health care industry, I see there is a generational gap. I'm not being critical about it. I do think the work-life balance expectations are different, and sometimes appropriate and sometimes not appropriate, and that tends to create a gap in the ability or desire to work long hours."* A millennial respondent countered that by saying, *"I don't know that there are generational differences in terms of what people want from their workforce culture. It's more that the younger generation has different decision-making in terms of leaving."* A Generation X respondent said, *"The young people we have working here are extremely hard-working. They work evenings. They put in a lot of effort. I think they would like some protected time, but my impression is*

[3] Search conducted October 2, 2019

[4] Payne, Susan, *Broome County Workforce Data Analysis*, Commissioned by The Agency, Broome County, November 2016, Appendix A., p.31

[5] Table B23001, Sex by Age by Employment Status, 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

that they're driven just as much my generation. Every once in a while, I hear people knock millennials and Gen Z. All the local kids in our high school are working. I think they have less free time than I did."

"I'm one of those people who seems to be pretty young for my job and the group of people I tend to associate with in the non-profit sector are all young. There aren't any baby boomers in that group which leads me to believe it's not so much a matter of a leadership gap, as it is an occasional lack of faith in the capabilities of the younger generation. There are young people who live here. Certainly, there is an age gap. There's always an exodus of people of a certain age, but evidence bears out that, if not a majority, many return to the area. I don't think that's as much an issue in a Gen X or millennial's desire to lead. I think there's probably more of a lack of desire to put someone perceived as young in charge of something that's really important. I don't think the problem is unique. I think this is something that literally every generation has struggled with. I don't think millennials get shit on more than anyone else. It's how generations interact with each other. It's not a unique problem."

Respondents said that there is a lack of trust between the generations which can be a barrier. A Generation Y respondent said, *"From personal experience, I think there is some ageism in the community with respect to young professionals being in leadership. There is a hesitancy to trust young professionals with leadership."* A Generation X respondent said, *"[Young leaders] are not necessarily doing things the way [older leaders] would do it. I can see their frustration when that occurs and perhaps you have to go through that. [Older leaders] don't necessarily let them try and give them guard rails."* Another Gen X'er said, *"I think there are some power issues as well. That's always going to be there. I see that in my own generation. I'm a peacekeeper. I can relate to the generation above and below. I always hear the work ethic has changed and there's a lack of trust [for] investments to happen."*

Respondents also noted differing expectations as to how and when leadership positions are attained. A Generation X leader said, *"I am a leader and was fully embraced quickly. I'm young, female and I came into a 'good old boy' network situation. I do really believe the older population is passionate about embracing new leaders. I think there needs to be an understanding of what needs to be earned. I personally heard some young professionals say 'we're not heard, we're not respected.' I've not experienced that. There is a level of needing to put in some time. I think there is a need for understanding how to bridge the gap of what we're dealing with. We have a completely different generation that has different expectations; a generation that's not used to waiting for anything. Food is instant, information is instant, everything is instant and so leadership should be instant. I've seen that gap and [it's a question of] how do we invest in our young professionals coming up."* A Generation Y respondent disputed the validity of that assertion by saying, *"I think what we just talked about is perception and giving those younger team members a chance to hold those leadership positions, and trusting them to do so. But the perception from a lot of the Gen X'ers is they need to put their time in, that they're not ready to be leaders yet. The perception has to change as to what a leader is to open up those opportunities."*

Cultural Environment

Respondents frequently noted that the cultural and recreational environment of their community negatively impacts organizations' ability to attract and retain leaders. Respondents said the lack of entertainment options, activities, and wellness amenities prevents people from choosing to live in the region. One respondent shared, *"There is not a broad appeal to relocate to Binghamton. I was just recently planning to hire a manager level position. The person I offered [the job] to was fairly blunt, saying, 'I would like the work, but it's not the community I'd like to settle in.' The younger generation is interested in a different work balance and style. I think a community [being] an attractive place to live is an important factor. They're looking for lifestyle and it's a different approach than the baby boomers had taken."*

"I think it's the rural-ness and the perception that there's not many things to do."

"Overall as a community, I think we've made a lot of movement forward with respect to things to do - arts, music - but I think we could do more. Young professionals are going to want to live in this community when other things are available."

While respondents noted that there has been an increase in the number of restaurants and recreational activities in Binghamton, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that the number of restaurants and other arts and entertainment establishments has remained relatively flat.

Table 4. Number of Establishments by Year in Binghamton Area

Establishment Type	2012	2018
Private arts, entertainment & recreation	64	68
Restaurants and other eating places	357	356

Respondents also noted that the generational divide can affect the environment within an organization and the community as a whole. They said a resistance to change and a lack of progressiveness in the community are barriers to drawing in younger professionals. One respondent said, *"The workforce has been dominated by baby boomers. There are a lot of organizations that have a culture that is not attractive to Gen X or millennials. Gen X is the technology generation. Boomers resist it, resist change. At least in the non-profit world, we have more female leadership than in the private sector. But even [non-profit] organizations that I've been in that have had male, boomer leadership, [I was] still dealing with a lot of sexism and gross, old school things. You're getting more praise for your appearance than your work."*

Leadership Shortfall

Respondents said that a lack of planning and leadership are responsible for the difficulties in creating a pipeline. One respondent said, *"Most businesses, if they are proactive about succession planning, are working on that all the time. I think if there's a real problem, it's a problem with the current leadership not searching out succession."* Another said, *"I think there has been a problem cultivating a talent pipeline for past couple of decades so a lot of people have left the area who would have been good ready leaders. For a long time, I think there just weren't positions available, or that was the perception in the local community. So, folks who would have been qualified leaders have left the area."* Another respondent commented, *"I'm sure individual companies look through their myopic view of 'how can we help our workforce to succeed as a company', but not many employers have much focus on generating and growing leaders."*

Respondents said a lack of knowledge and skill in the succession planning process could be a challenge among non-profit boards of directors. One said, *"My personal opinion is when the responsibility falls to the board of directors to replace a CEO, the boards are not prepared to make that recruiting and selection plan. Locally, boards have not made the right decision. Whether that [is due] to the lack of experience on a board for recruitment or hiring or if they don't fully understand the organization or the needs of the organization, it speaks to how to well diligently they are being trained."*

Old Guard Control

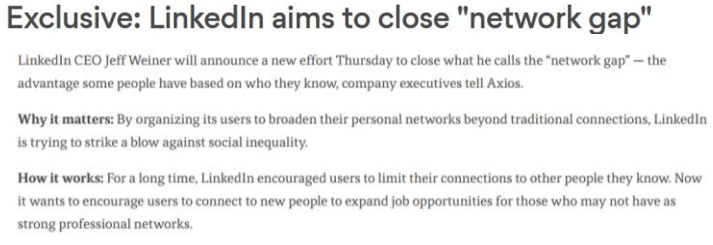
A number of respondents from all generations suggested that the "old guard leaders" are hesitant to provide opportunities for training or mentoring because they don't want to lose their leadership role. One baby boomer said a key barrier is *"the hesitancy of some leaders to share from their current positions in the fear that somebody is going to take over. I think there is reluctance. I've seen it. Leaders don't share for fear that they're going to be replaced."* A Gen X respondent said, *"I think sometimes younger generations present a threat to the status quo and they're not given the room to really flourish."*

> *"[A barrier is] the current leaders' unwillingness to train, mentor, empower and delegate opportunities to those who have fresh ideas and energies. The leaders are holding on and grasping to what they have and what they know, and younger people are becoming frustrated at their unwillingness to be open to fresh ideas."*

Detached Networks

Respondents from all age groups said that the lack of overlapping networks within their communities result in missed opportunities for linking potential leaders to available leadership positions. One respondent of color said, "*I do see a lack of networking by the executives or higher-ranking management. I don't see them really reaching out beyond their circle. If I'm at an event where I've been asked to be there for my company, I don't often see the senior manager speaking to people outside their circles. And I don't think the young professional would approach a high-ranking member unless they have confidence. There are a lot of people who are only lifting up those who they know and only asking people they know through someone else, instead of reaching out and recruiting and getting to know the young professional community."* An older, white respondent said, *"I had lunch yesterday with two new members of [our] board. One is a young woman who asked why I had wanted her to come on the board. I said 'for obvious reasons, that she is young, but from the community.' She said [she and her cohorts] talk about it all the time. They want to be involved, but don't know how to do it or who to contact. My perspective was the opposite. I have many friends who are chairs and they're always saying they don't know how to connect with the younger generation. Very clearly there is a communication gap, but it's much more than that. It's a lack of knowing; it's a network breakdown. I think from both perspectives there is frustration. There are young people who would be happy to be involved and older people who have limited number of ways of how to get to them."*

Nationally, the network problem is being recognized by LinkedIn, a social network platform for professionals. With their new Plus One Pledge, the company is hoping to open users' networks by encouraging them to connect with others outside of their network.[6]



Exclusive: LinkedIn aims to close "network gap"

LinkedIn CEO Jeff Weiner will announce a new effort Thursday to close what he calls the "network gap" — the advantage some people have based on who they know, company executives tell Axios.

Why it matters: By organizing its users to broaden their personal networks beyond traditional connections, LinkedIn is trying to strike a blow against social inequality.

How it works: For a long time, LinkedIn encouraged users to limit their connections to other people they know. Now it wants to encourage users to connect to new people to expand job opportunities for those who may not have as strong professional networks.

[6] AXIOS newsletter, September 26, 2019

Infrastructure Issues

Many respondents noted that the infrastructure of their communities is a key barrier to drawing in leadership talent. In particular, housing can present a challenge in attracting and retaining professionals. A respondent from Binghamton said, *"We don't have a lot of quality starter homes. People who are first starting out want to get a nice family home or apartment."* This sentiment was echoed by a Tioga County respondent saying, *"There's not great housing for singles or couples without kids. There aren't any cool condo developments with pools and fitness facilities."*

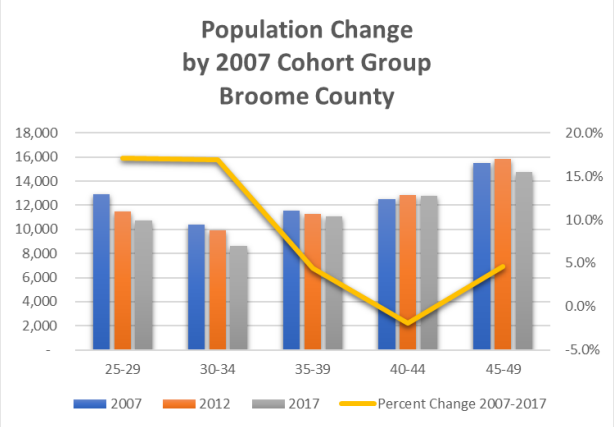
A respondent from Delaware County noted, *"There is lack of self-service internet in some of the outlying areas. There are some adorable small towns with some great businesses. There's a chance for people to have a decent life and a job, but we won't get people to come here if they can't even get internet."*

Training Deficiencies

A number of respondents said that there is insufficient focus on and investment in training new leaders for both paid and volunteer roles. One respondent from the not-for-profit sector said that in a previous role she had noticed a lack of qualified individuals for leadership positions. She said, *"They might have had a good background, but had a lack of supervision and management responsibility [experience.] They might have been a content expert in their field, but it didn't mean they could manage people. That's our weakness across all industries: not putting enough money in professional development to manage other people."* A for-profit leader concurred saying, *"In my experience, the majority of people in leadership roles have gotten there by attrition. They have been promoted up because of seniority, but have never been given leadership training or development. When you get young talent to come in, [their initiative is] quickly stifled. [The current leaders] lead with insecurity because they don't actually have leadership development. I think that's the primary issue."*

Population Size

Several respondents said the population size of both the community in general as well as its younger cohort is a significant barrier to having enough leaders ready to take the reins. One respondent said, *"Our community does not draw young professionals for the most part. It's a smaller pool to choose from."* This view is supported by Census data showing that the population of Broome County aged 25-29 in 2007 declined by 17.2% between 2007 and 2017 (ages 35-39). Those 5 years older, ages 30-34 in 2007, declined by nearly as much at 16.9% in the same time frame. These trends are similar for the other counties in the CFSCNY catchment area.



In Delaware County, the population decline is exacerbated by a large part-time population in the county. One respondent remarked, *"It's not a just a population decline, it's a full-time population decline. People who are here full-time are more likely to be involved in a board or on a non-profit board. We have a 45-year tradition of doing an antiques flea-market and it didn't happen this year because the organization is headed by some lovely women who do not live in the community or haven't for years. There is an absence of connectivity to have that event function."* In Chenango County, the aging population is also having an impact on volunteer activities. A respondent said, *"When they set these [events] up, there was*

a larger cohort of folks involved in civic affairs. I think we're at a point where the younger group is getting smaller and is less inclined to join things. It's getting difficult to find leaders. The one that pops to mind is the Blues Fest. They run eight concerts in the summer and a two-day festival. All of the people involved are late 50's or early 60's and no one is coming up behind to take over that project. It's very successful, but it's in jeopardy of fizzling out. Norwich is a little pocket of prosperity. There were some fairly influential movers and shakers in community, but they're in their 80's."

Opportunities to Move Up the Ladder

Respondents also frequently noted that the combination of a lack of opportunities available for potential young leaders, a lack of mentorship from older professionals, and a lack of a clear ladder to greater leadership responsibility are significant barriers to creating a pipeline for new leaders.

One millennial respondent said, *"It's hard because we know, it's a difficult market to stick around here unless we were going to get innovative [with our careers.] We tend to go outside of the area to find a career. We're moving [out of state]."* Another millennial respondent said, *"From my perspective, I see a lot of talent [that is] not being nurtured to prepare them for that upcoming leadership role. [There are] people who are perfectly capable of being trained and guided, but I'm not seeing a concerted effort to make that happen. Would that responsibility fall on the executive leader as a mentor to help the younger talent know that they have the potential to be that next leader? Or would that be the responsibility of that young, up-and-coming professional to make it known [they want to advance]? I think it's a more powerful gesture if someone [from the top] says, 'I see you are proactive in your career and I want you to know I can help you.' I haven't gotten much of that. I'm very proactive in the community and it's only now having started a role in well-known respected company that I'm getting those offers. It's important to recognize there are people in different stages of their career. I feel that if you are approached by someone higher-ranking than you [who says] they see something in you, it can change you. I don't see it happening. I'm trying my best to connect young professionals with boards, executive directors, to meet leaders outside their companies. I see the talent."* A Gen X respondent said, *"I don't think there are a lot of mid-level management opportunities for younger leaders to cut their teeth on. There are some great folks around, but I don't think they're often give the experience they need to step into those leadership roles."*

Other Barriers

Other barriers noted by respondents included:

- Low Wages - *"A lot of our talent is moving out. We can't offer compensation that would keep them here and interested. I think we have to attract that talent pipeline with compensation [commensurate with] what they're doing."*
- Lack of Funding for Training - *"I think some of the business and industries that would like to provide leadership training don't necessarily have the funds."*

Current Programs

Interview participants were asked what kinds of programs or activities currently taking place in their communities are addressing the leadership gap. Respondents mentioned the Leadership Institutes in each county as well as various young professionals' groups, such as the Southern Tier Young Professionals Group and United Way's Emerging Leaders Group, as the primary programs of which they were aware. Tioga County has instituted a leadership program for government employees as one succession planning tool. Respondents also mentioned some organization-specific leadership programs and noted that some community-based organizations, such as the Urban League, have programs for the specific populations they serve. In addition to these formal programs, respondents cited local efforts to improve the attractiveness of their communities through downtown revitalization and collaborative quality of life initiatives.

Some respondents noted the small number of participants that go through the leadership institutes limited the impact of the programs. In addition, respondents said the cost of the programs can be prohibitive for some young professionals working in the non-profit or small business sectors. Some respondents expressed concern that the young professionals' groups were more or less social groups, and were a danger of re-creating the "who you know" network culture.

Strategies

Respondents offered several ideas for strategies to address the leadership gap, the bulk of which directly address the current barriers to creating a successful pipeline: ladders, mentorship, networks, and training.

Ladders, Mentors & Networks

Respondents focused primarily on the need for clear ladders toward leadership positions, the importance of one-on-one mentorship, and the value of intentional efforts to broaden leadership networks; they also stressed the importance of all three efforts working in concert with one another. One respondent said, *"I think if young people don't see a future in something, you can work as hard as you want as an organization, they're bright enough to see the writing on the wall."* Another respondent said, *"I certainly think one-on-one is more effective. I think it's a combination of having somebody who has a natural born inclination toward being a leader and then being in a place where those skills can be put into practice. I don't think leadership is an academic exercise. I think you can only figure it out when you're in it and having somebody to help you navigate is helpful."* Another respondent remarked, *"I think there is a strong need for identifying and lifting up women and minorities into leadership. Think that's a real gap and that's really tough. When we find a really sharp one, everyone wants her. There are other very strong, successful, sharp minorities, but how do we identify them?"*

Another respondent shared, *"I get nervous about young professional programs. I don't think they're very cool. There are a lot of younger professionals that are just out doing stuff. They're making stuff happen. They're engaged, on boards, figuring out how to play roles and how to exist in the power structures. That is what we should be doing instead of having a group of people we coddle. We've had young professional groups over the years and I think they are kind of boring and dorky and not very interesting. We need to give them the tools they need. You really need to know who is friends with whom and where the bodies are buried and who is pissed at who and what the issues are. And that's a whole different dynamic than going to the zoo. I think [mentorships are] good if done in a smart way, but you have to try to get people who are really engaged to offer themselves to do this. It has to be done in such a way that you connect the emerging leaders to people who are in the mix."*

Training

Respondents also noted a need for leadership training that focused on management skills, team building, and how to be a strategic, emotionally intelligent leader.

Measures of Success

The most commonly suggested measure of success respondents offered was evidence of younger people inhabiting leadership roles throughout the community. Respondents also said that success could be demonstrated through the existence of a larger pool of trained job candidates as well as more people volunteering for leadership roles on boards.

Indicators

Currently, there is not a comprehensive data source that provides the age of community leaders. As such, using several indicators together could provide a view on whether the region makes progress toward reducing the leadership gap.

While the BroomeIsGood.com job opening aggregator could show how many managerial positions are available now and in the future, a reduction in available positions could also suggest an economic downturn rather than an increase in retention or a larger applicant pool. Using the number of open positions in conjunction with other indicators, such as the number of younger cohorts retained and added to the area (through Census data), the number of young professionals participating in leadership programs, and information from SUNY Binghamton's Senior Survey, a more comprehensive and cohesive picture of the leadership gap could be created.

Diversity, Inclusion & Equity

Climate

When asked about the climate and culture of their community with respect to diversity, inclusion, and equity, there was a distinct difference in response based on age group. Older respondents were more likely to have a positive view of the community's climate than were younger respondents.

Table 5. Perception of County Climate by Age Group

Generation	Positive	Negative	Mixed
Baby Boomer	42.3%	50.0%	7.7%
Generation X	38.1%	47.7%	14.3%
Generation Y	16.7%	66.7%	16.7%
Millennial	13.3%	73.3%	13.3%

"Needs Improvement"

The most frequently offered assessment respondents gave of their community's diversity climate is that while diversity may be improving, active inclusion still needs more work. One respondent said, *"As a steward of public good, I don't think our local government embraces and celebrates diversity. I think we need more young people, more women and diversity in local government and we'll see things changing. But we're not seeing that. I think people don't see that we'd be able to work more effectively and with authenticity when we have more diverse people. Not only leading government, but working in businesses and living in the community."* Another respondent said, *"I think it's on everyone's radar, but how they engage and address it varies from organization to organization. I can tell you our board is not very diverse. They know it. We discuss it often. In terms of action or how you really address that within your organization and the priority of how to address that, some folks are doing better than others."* Another said, *"I don't think there's openness. I think there's a false sense of diversity just because you might see people who don't look the same. I don't think there's equity or inclusion."* A millennial respondent said, *"Leadership and people in positions of power are predominantly white while the county grows more diverse."*

"I think the county is very open. I think individuals present the challenge. For example, the other day I learned that we have a group in Binghamton, a coordinated group, specifically against law enforcement. I thought that was troubling. I think it's the individuals in the community that present problems. I don't think it's the leadership. Or even the past culture of Broome County."

Open

Tioga County respondents frequently said their county's climate is open. An African-American respondent from the county said, *"There's pretty much openness here. There has been since back in the 60's. I grew up here. I happen to be African American and I've been involved in many aspects in the community. The county is very open and there is certainly diversity awareness. Some departments have done training around it. The village has had a female police chief which probably years ago was unheard of, but not now. I don't think there are obstacles."* Another Tioga County respondent concurred, *"We have a large LGBTQ population and it's very inclusive. It's been like*

that for years here. It's been the norm. Nobody seems to care. It's always interesting to me. I think of it as a conservative area. Democrats don't win here. But it's inclusive. It's comfortable for most people to live in."

The Broome County respondents who said their county's climate is open qualified that assessment in one way or another. Two respondents described the climate as open, but said that people of color are not interested in joining the community or organizations. One respondent said, *"I think that we're open to diversity. I don't think there are a lot of diverse people who are looking to be in our community."* Other Broome County respondents noted that the county is generally open to diversity, but there is opportunity for more progress. One respondent said, *"I think there is openness, but there is a subtle degree of lower socio-economic segregation that happens in certain segments of community. So, you get pigeon-holed in those areas, sometimes out of convenience and sometimes out of comfort, but definitely because of some of the diversity issues and socio-economic issues. We have pockets where the African-American community can settle down or the Asian community can settle down. But if you're affluent, those barriers are diminishing."*

Mixed

A number of respondents said the county climate with respect to diversity is mixed. One respondent from Otsego County said, *"In my immediate environment, there is quite a bit of diversity in that we have a lot of residents from various countries working at the hospital. I think the hospital works hard to make sure they feel comfortable in the community. It's something the community wants. Outside of Cooperstown, I don't know. I think that there certainly is a fear, if you get into the more rural areas of Upstate, fear and mistrust of people who are different."* Another respondent noted a potential generational pushback to embracing diversity. She said, *"It's hard because it definitely goes by the age of people. I think the younger generation coming into the workforce and kids in high school are more open to diversity whereas there are still older generations that maybe aren't."* Another young professional said the generational view of diversity has an impact on whether younger people are interested in living in a community. He said, *"It varies generationally and geographically. The younger, urban population is much more likely to view diversity, inclusion and equity as valuable for its own sake than the older, more rural population. Young people are more likely to commit to a community that values diversity, inclusion and equity."*

Closed

Some respondents said their community climate is closed to diversity and see the issues polarizing the nation mirrored in their own community. One respondent said, *"With what's going on in country, there's a lot of volatility and anger with people with different views. I don't think the President in Washington helps that, he fuels that. In Broome there is an increasing number of people of color here. A number of people embrace that and are thrilled and there are others who think 'why are those people coming here and ruining our community?'"* Another respondent in Delaware County said, *"I heard openly racist statements from leadership - unashamed, sexist, unapologetic - on the legislature."*

> *"I would call it mixed. And anyone who says that we as a county and as a community and nation is doing the best we can, is probably an old white person. That's not reality. You can always do better."*

With respect to gender equity, a respondent from Broome said, *"As a female leader, I did hit some walls. I had a supportive board, but I dealt with some male counterparts that treated me differently than they*

would have a male. I was great if I went along with what they wanted, but [challenging them is] not what I was supposed to do."

Respondents also said their county climate in terms of socio-economic inclusion was not positive. A Broome County respondent said, *"It's not good. Definitely not good at all. No one wants to talk about it. They sweep it under the rug and create excuses about why it may not be good. Broome County and Binghamton are symptomatic of a lot of things happening across the country. It's not outright – it's not in your face, but I think it's very easy to see the haves and have nots around here."*

Segregation

A handful of respondents noted that there is a sense of racial segregation in their community. One respondent said, *"I think for the most part, Binghamton is relatively open-minded, but also fairly segregated also. It's not totally abnormal for a small community, based on how the suburbs are set up. You rarely hear about any negative interactions or at least any intentional negative interactions. Everybody seems relatively tolerant, but you're in your space and I'm in mine."* An African-American respondent said, *"I see a lack of assimilation. I think a lot of that has to do with those who are here assuming that people who are coming from other environments are different and can't mix in and mesh with what we do here. I get a sense of that. I do still feel like people stay within their own circles in our community. It's very easy [for organizations to have] a lack of diversity because so many are keeping with those who they have known and grown up with or worked with and not taking a chance on someone with a different background. I've experienced some of that. It's almost like it happens by default. It's not like they are thinking they won't hire [a diverse workforce], but without being proactive, it doesn't seem to be happening organically."*

Diversity in Leadership

There is no readily available source of information that provides the percentage of organizational leaders by race or ethnicity. However, data suggest the counties in the CFSCNY region do not have diverse leadership in terms of race and ethnicity or in terms of gender.

As shown in Table 6, Census data[7] indicate that Broome and Otsego counties have a disproportionate percent of white people in the Officials and Managers job category[8] compared to the percent of workers in the county who are white. Broome, Chenango, Delaware and Tioga County also have disproportionately fewer women in the upper management job categories as compared to the percent of women working in each county.

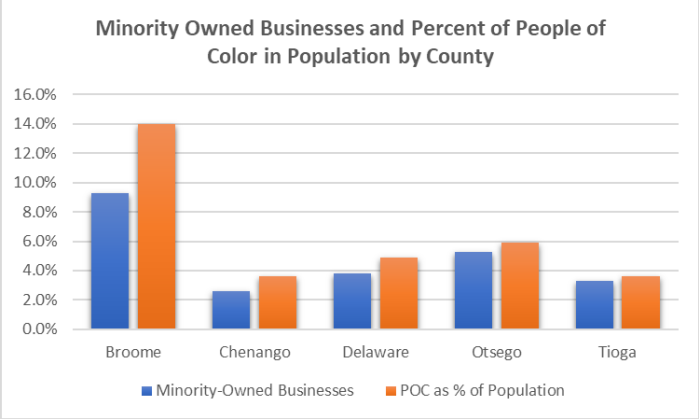
[7] Table EEO-ALL04R, EEO 4r. EEO-1 Job Categories by Sex, and Race/Ethnicity for Residence Geography, Total Population, Civilian labor force 16 years and over, EEO Tabulation 2006-2010, ACS 5-Year data & Table B20005, Sex by Work Experience for the Population 16 and Over, ACS 2006-2010, 5 Year Estimates

[8] includes executive and senior level officials such as chief executive officers as well as first or mid-level officials and managers such as vice presidents or group directors.

Table 6. Percent of Workers by Race/Ethnicity and Gender by Select Job Category and County

County	Select Job Categories	White Alone	People of Color	Female
Broome	Officials & Managers	**94.6%**	5.4%	**34.4%**
	Professionals	88.4%	11.6%	52.1%
	All workers' 16+	*90.1%*	*9.9%*	*51.7%*
Chenango	Officials & Managers	97.2%	2.8%	**36.3%**
	Professionals	97.7%	2.3%	56.4%
	All workers' 16+	*97.4%*	*2.6%*	*50.6%*
Delaware	Officials & Managers	93.6%	6.4%	**36.9%**
	Professionals	95.0%	5.0%	61.9%
	All workers' 16+	*95.7%*	*4.3%*	*49.9%*
Otsego	Officials & Managers	**96.9%**	3.1%	47.1%
	Professionals	93.3%	6.7%	62.0%
	All workers' 16+	*95.2%*	*4.8%*	*52.1%*
Tioga	Officials & Managers	97.3%	2.7%	**41.1%**
	Professionals	95.6%	3.4%	55.6%
	All workers' 16+	*97.5%*	*2.5%*	*50.7%*

Census data[9] also shows that the percentage of minority-owned businesses trails the percentage of people of color within the population in all the counties in the CFSCNY region, but is most pronounced in Broome County. In Broome County 14% of the county is non-white, but only 9.3% of firms are minority-owned.



Respondents, for the most part, said that there is greater gender equity within non-profit organizations than in for-profit businesses. According to the New York State Department of Labor's Pay Gap Study, pay equity between men and women is a challenge in the CFSCNY region. Delaware County has the lowest percentage of earnings for females in proportion to male earnings, but all five counties trail New York State as a whole.

Table 7. Pay Equity by County

County	Total Median Earnings	Male Median Earnings	Female Median Earnings	Female Earnings as a Percentage of Male Earnings
Broome	$42,075	$46,400	$37,097	80.0%
Chenango	$38,940	$42,351	$34,086	80.5%
Delaware	$40,080	$42,950	$33,904	78.9%
Otsego	$39,032	$42,612	$35,171	82.5%
Tioga	$45,516	$50,067	$41,434	82.8%
NYS	$50,589	$53,131	$46,105	86.8%

[9] US Census Bureau QuickFacts, business ownership data from 2012.

Barriers to Diversity & Inclusion in Leadership Roles

Population Size

Population size was the most commonly cited barrier to diversity in leadership. A respondent from Oneonta said, *"From my standpoint, even when trying to get board members, those people are not presenting themselves. I feel like that we have different types of cultures in our community, but the people who are here are not necessarily the ones who are going to [inhabit] those roles. Either they are not qualified or we are not being able to draw them in. We are certainly seeing a more diverse community - it's growing in different types of cultures and races - but [the leaders] are just not there. They might not have the skills or ambition."* A respondent from Delaware County said, *"It's just not a diverse population. Those people are so few to represent that population. They don't take the positions."* A respondent from Tioga County said, *"I think it's a function of our inherent population. It just hasn't had much diversity. First of all, it was all farming and all white and then IBM came in and it was all white, male engineers and white female secretaries. It hasn't changed. It's not anybody's fault. There's nobody to point to."*

Respondents from Broome County also said there is a small population of potential leaders from diverse backgrounds to draw from. One respondent from Broome County said, *"We're clearly not very diverse. Some of it's just the denominator. There's not a lot of diversity in our area. And if you dive into it further, how many people of diverse backgrounds are in a financial position to be a leader or do more in the community? The pool is not very big."* One respondent said, *"We had approached a couple of women to serve [on our board]. But because there are so few black women that would serve in a leadership role, they're on so many other boards and they don't have time."* A respondent said the non-white population of the county is either centered at Binghamton University or is poor. Another said, *"There is a lack of qualified and interested people – a shortage of supply of those people."*

While racial and ethnic diversity in the more rural counties in CFSCNY's catchment area is limited, Broome County has a much more diverse population and the lack of people of color in leadership roles is stark. Of the 15 county legislators, all are white and only three are women. Of the seven Binghamton City Council members, all are white and one is a woman. While a comprehensive breakdown of other leaders in the county by race, such as board members and CEOs, is not available, the general impression from respondents is that there are very few people of color in these roles in Broome County. However, an analysis of Census data show that in Broome County, 12% or approximately 4,200 people[10], are people of color who have a bachelor's degree or higher – a population that are presumably qualified for leadership positions.

Table 8. People of Color as Percent of the Population by County[11]

People of Color by County	Percent	Number
Broome	13.9%	27,261
Chenango	3.9%	1,901
Delaware	5.0%	2,297
Otsego	6.5%	3,948
Tioga	3.3%	1,627

4,263 People of Color with Bachelor's Degrees or Higher

[10] Table C15002, Sex by Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over by Race, 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

[11] Table DP05, ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates, 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Bias

A number of respondents described a recent incident where a Broome County board member had publicly denounced a focus on diversity in recruiting for board membership. Respondents suggested the individual's views were not representative of the organization or the community as a whole, but were indicative of the viewpoint of a specific cohort in the community. One respondent said, "*"[Another] barrier is the outdated ways of thinking in this community. [There was] an instance where someone said that they didn't think it was important to have diversity among board of directors. That says more about the person's character than the group he represents. I can't say that's across the board, but it's something that I've come across and I have recognized it among the older generation."*

> *"Outdated ways of thinking are still challenges to rising in your career. You're not viewed as part of the community. Lots of people ask where I'm from when I was born and raised here."*

Some respondents said that there were issues of bias in their communities which create challenges to diversity, equity, and inclusion in leadership roles. A respondent from Tioga County said, *"I know there's a perception in our community if there are people of color moving into the community that they would be undesirable. We've had all the discussions in the community regarding the influx of drugs and the ignorant comments that it's the people from the city. That's the perception – if you see a black person, they think they've moved here from the city. And it's not true, they are people who have lived here all their lives."* Another respondent said, *"I'm sure there's some of level of bias whether intentional or unintentional, conscious or subconscious. It's hard to figure out the best way to break that cycle to bring people out of that mode. My kids went to the elementary school with the highest percentage of low-income kids in the district. People kept saying 'don't have them go there.' I thought it would be good to have exposure to have kids that don't have the same experience they do. The school was the English as a second language hub, so my kids had exposure to all these kids from diverse backgrounds. But none of the other kids from other schools did and it was a culture shock in middle school."* Another respondent said, *"I do think there is a quiet racism and prejudice, and not to mention being a smaller community based on who you know doesn't help a lot of groups of people."*

Old Guard Control

As with the Leadership Gap, respondents frequently reported that a key barrier to achieving diversity and equity in leadership positions is the so-called old guard of primarily white, upper class, and older citizens who continue to hold onto control. One respondent from Broome County said, *"It's old people with money in our community. They're the same people making all the decisions on behalf of our community. For a while we had a state senator running everything. Nobody wanted to talk about it and everybody knew it was happening. We're a political county and nobody is going to talk about it and if you start, nobody will want to associate with you. You could destroy your career. The political climate is insane here. Everyone is fighting for that piece of the pie. And I think no matter what, we're all human and I think some of us know how to play the game better than others and when you're out, you're out."* A female Gen X'er said, *"Over the past year, I've noticed the good old boys' network. It's the 'nice kid, go sit down. The real men are going to be at the table and make*

> *"I think there's a certain network within the community and if you're not part of that network or have the ability to access that network, it's difficult to assume leadership. People of color, by and large, are not part of that network. And most of them are male. And older as well. I think that their white, male privilege insulates them to the fact of it – they aren't blatantly aware."*

decisions.' That's one of the reasons I left where I was before. It's so prominent in some areas. If you look at the key movers in the community, all but one is a male. And they're all in the same age demographic, socio-economic status, mostly white. They all know each other very well."

Culture

A number of respondents said they thought the culture of their community presented a barrier to diversity and inclusion. The more rural counties in particular noted that their communities were closed to outsiders. One Chenango County respondent said, *"I've lived here 30 years, and I'm not even considered a resident. There is a mass of people who have always lived here and there are different gradations of how you're viewed. To be viewed as a local business owner, you have to be second or third generation and very entrenched. Everybody else is still not thought of as part of the community."* A respondent from Tioga County said, *"For a lot of people, if you weren't born here or didn't grow up here, it's hard to feel at home. You tend to stick to the people you know."*

Networks

As with the Leadership Gap, the lack of overlapping networks was also noted as a key barrier to achieving diversity in leadership positions. One respondent from Broome County said, *"In the community of color, there are a limited number of people who are asked to sit on boards or serve in roles. There is a whole set of other people that nobody knows about. And that's not inclusiveness. That's very selective. It's a question of knowing."* A respondent from Delaware County said, "*The diversity challenge is that this is a primarily white, Anglo Saxon county and although Fleischmanns is a wonderful, diverse community, the [residents] all operate within their own comfort zone. There's not much interaction or cross-pollination. I'm not sure why that happens. And whose responsibility is that to be more connected and open? This is a hard conversation."*

> *"If you were to ask folks from a diversity of backgrounds, I suspect that you would find, especially in this community, that people will reach out to the three black people they know. Those people tend to get tapped a lot. Because they're the known 'professional black people' in our community. It's not the way it should be."*

Socio-economic status was also noted as a significant barrier to access when leadership opportunities were concerned. One respondent said, *"People might have the intelligence and determination to be leaders, but don't have the opportunity because they have been raised in an atmosphere of poverty. They don't have the social network, resources, and mentorship that people coming out of middle class have. My kids know how to get a job, how to network, but if you grew up in poverty you might not have seen that or have those skills."* Another respondent said the lack of connection between the resource-deprived population and those providing support to that population results in poor decision-making. She said, *"Broome County is resource rich, but there are no good, credible messengers [from the resource-poor community]. Or if you get one good credible messenger, then you think that's enough. There are not enough people at the table letting [the decision-makers] know what solutions would actually help them. Instead people with resources are throwing money at programs. There are not enough opportunities for people to be included in decision-making to move themselves socially and economically."*

> *"I think it starts from a young age having access to resources that folks of privilege have. Having opportunities for mentorship along the way. Where somebody recognizes your potential, and encourages you to realize the potential you have."*

Other Barriers

Some of the other barriers to diversity, inclusion and equity mentioned by respondents included:

- Lack of Knowledge - *"I think it is mostly a lack of knowledge of what to do and how to make the change. The biggest barrier is historically that's how things have gone. Usually those with the most power are male, older, and not people of color. That's the history of our country. The issue is knowing how to make a change and being active in making a change. As opposed to thinking it will change because people are generally good. They need to know what actions and what to do."*
- Risk Aversion - *"Very few leadership positions or community prominent positions are being offered to minorities and the [minorities] don't feel comfortable exposing themselves."*
- Lack of Effort - *"This is an environment with great divides. Unless there's a concerted effort of inclusion, there will be a perception of exclusion."*
- No Sense of Community - *"To the extent that we are able to recruit or entice a diverse population to the community, we have to work very hard to create the right conditions to keep them here. There's not a particular structure for doing that. You form a group, I'll form a group and we won't talk to another. Consistently, when I have known persons of color who have been doctors and lawyers and other professionals in the community, they said they don't find a community here. That's always kind of a shocking statement. One of the reasons my husband and I treasure this area is because it's a good community. It's a failure to find a comfort level and I'm not sure we know how to address it. How do you find a community? How do you link up and how do you keep that community connected to the broader community*?"

Current Programs

When asked what programs or activities were taking place in their community to address diversity, inclusion, and equity, the bulk of respondents said there wasn't much going on. However, respondents did mention:

- the Broome-Tioga Workforce Opportunity Impact Program
- the NAACP's Youth Leadership Program
- the Urban League
- Church groups and grassroots organizations
- VINES summer employment program

Strategies

Concerted Efforts

Respondents most frequently said that intentional efforts are necessary to make progress regarding diversity and inclusion. In particular, respondents said prioritizing diversity in hiring, recruiting and mentoring are critical. One respondent said, *"One person we recruited, he's not what you think of as board material yet because he's very young and just getting started in his career. But he's super bright, super capable and has a lot of potential and gets what we do. So, we recruited him and made it clear to him 'you're not going to know everything. We don't expect it. We want your perspective, recognize your potential and want to continue our relationship with you and give you opportunities to grow professionally with us'."* Another said, *"If you don't make an intention, it doesn't materialize. Unless it's something you're actively marketing, it falls back on the default as far as I'm concerned."* Another respondent reported, *"There seem to be a lot of initiatives where we talk a lot and hear all of the*

concerns and there are no action items associated with these discussions. For example, a non-profit could agree to recruit a board member from the graduating class of an initiative."

Education

A handful of respondents also said that more education and training around diversity is needed. One African-American respondent said one of her goals is to provide a different narrative to counter-act the racist messages prevalent in her community. She said, *"In 2012, as a poor person and minority, I'd have to listen to it over and over. Ex-Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, I had to hear him go out and talk about how black people didn't know anything about honest work and we should make our children go to school early in the morning and clean up the classroom after school. He was saying our children were not familiar with an honest check. He's making that 'factual' statement nation-wide which is not factual. [He was saying to] take the jobs away from the mothers and fathers and give them to the children. This is the information out there. Rick Santorum was going to teach black people how to earn a check. You have the thought all over the community that we don't work, we're lazy, we want a welfare check and that's not true."*

Another respondent acknowledged, *"I need help as a white male of my generation. I would participate in any kind of training that would help me better understand some of the unconscious, inherent racism that permeates my upbringing and our culture and I think there's a lot of that everywhere. It's some deep work that needs to take place on an individual and community level."*

Community Events

Respondents also said community events which embrace and celebrate diversity are valuable tools to address diversity and inclusion. One respondent from Otsego County said, *"I know a lot of residents at Bassett come from China, India, Pakistan – all over the place. The individuals who run the program have monthly events where they bring resident families together and have a movie night or one of the residents makes dinner. They celebrate each individual's background and culture. It's not just residents from other countries that participate. All interested families, even local families that grew up here, can come. And there's also been within the community statements everywhere that say 'we value diversity'."*

Measures of Success

By far, the indicator of success that respondents offered most frequently was greater diversity on boards of directors and in paid leadership positions. One respondent said, *"Minority-owned businesses, woman-owned businesses, looking at boards and seeing more gender parity. That'd be a great start – just seeing boards that are 50/50. We don't have a need for this conversation when it isn't odd that there is a woman or a black man or Spanish person in the room. Some of those are hard metrics to measure, but you know it when you see it and how it feels."* Another said, *"I think our community worksites need to look more like our schools. We need to mirror that."* Respondents also said attendance at professional events being more representative of the demographics of the community would be a marker of success.

Other respondents said equal opportunity for all sectors of the community was a key indicator of success. One respondent said, *"I think one of the things you could use to measure that is the number of low socio-economic status students who make it into 4-year, highly rated colleges. I think, in general, we look at how many kids go to college, but there are colleges and there are colleges. I think that would be a helpful way to look at whether there's more equity."* Another said an indicator of success would be, *"anyone who is living in our community who has the desire to work and aptitude to work and lead and grow can be matched up with an opportunity to do so rather than be left behind or move."*

Other respondents said a sign of success would be more frequent and more comfortable conversations around diversity. One respondent said, *"It would be the comfort level of all people coming together to collaborate and share resources."* Another respondent said, *"I think we would be more diverse and people would feel like this is a safe, comfortable place to be for people of all backgrounds and races. And I think we would be able to engage in conversations about race and diversity."*

Some respondents saw a need for a dramatic cultural shift for there to be success. One said, *"I think that would look like real collective impact. To anybody with a door, that door being knocked on and inviting everybody to the table. A mix of trickle down and trickle up working together. Nobody has all the answers for everything – but everybody has an answer for something. It would have to be a community shift - regular, not quarterly, not during Black History Month, or Women's History Month. It needs to be magnified."*

> *"I think what works is not being afraid to have the conversation. And if we're not afraid to talk about it and know that things might get uncomfortable while we're talking about it, we can get somewhere."*

Indicators

As with the Leadership Gap, indicators that could support those measures of success are not currently available nor are they easily created. Some potential easily available long-term indicators could include:

- Equal Employment Opportunity Data detailing occupation by race and ethnicity and sex (baseline: 2006-2010 ACS, updated: 2014-2018 ACS will be released Fall 2020/Spring 2021);
- Average wage by racial and ethnic groups and genders;
- Number of elected officials who are women or people of color;
- Organizational level data detailing the number of employees by race and gender.

Other information could be gathered through primary data collection efforts. For example, a periodic survey could be conducted with top organizations to gather demographic information on leaders including the composition of boards of directors or a community-based climate survey could be conducted to assess the level of inclusion or exclusion of minority groups to obtain a more nuanced view of diversity across time.

Workforce

Gaps

When asked what kinds of workforce gaps exist in their county, a common refrain among respondents was that there are many jobs available, but not enough workers. These responses are well-supported by other data. The NYS Department of Labor (NYSDOL) projects the number of positions in each occupation code by labor market region. In the Southern Tier, NYSDOL predicts a net increase of 20,820 positions across all occupations with 36,360 average openings per year. Table 9 shows the occupations with the greatest number of average annual openings projected for 2026 (food service workers, teachers, business and financial occupations, personal care aides, and drivers) and the annual openings as a percent total of positions (food service workers, personal care aides, agricultural workers, and receptionists). Responses from interview respondents indicated a need for more entry-level workers, health care workers, professionals (e.g. doctors, lawyers, engineers), and skilled laborers.

Table 9. Predicted Need for Workers in the Southern Tier by Occupation Group

Occupation Group	Total Positions in 2026	Net Change in Positions 2016 to 2026	Annual Average Openings	Net Increase in Annual Average Openings	Annual Average Openings as Percent of Total Positions
Total, All Occupations	**328,390**	**20,820**	**36,360**	**2,080**	11.1%
Food and Beverage Serving Workers	14,820	1,320	2,680	130	18.1%
Postsecondary Teachers	16,110	2,200	1,340	220	8.3%
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	11,590	860	1,060	90	9.1%
Personal Care Aides	7,060	1,650	1,040	160	14.7%
Motor Vehicle Operators	8,770	350	970	40	11.1%
Cooks and Food Preparation Workers	5,980	380	910	40	15.2%
Construction Trades Workers	8,700	600	880	60	10.1%
Counselors, Social Workers, and Other Community and Social Service Specialists	7,360	1,080	830	110	11.3%
Preschool, Primary, Secondary, and Special Education School Teachers	9,960	470	760	50	7.6%
Nursing, Psychiatric, and Home Health Aides	6,210	830	730	80	11.8%
Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners	11,990	1,440	660	140	5.5%
Top Executives	6,760	420	550	40	8.1%
Other Management Occupations	6,610	540	530	50	8.0%
Computer Occupations	7,110	650	510	70	7.2%
Health Technologists and Technicians	6,980	740	510	70	7.3%
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	4,840	490	470	50	9.7%
Receptionists and Information Clerks	3,110	360	410	40	13.2%
Engineers	4,840	550	350	60	7.2%
Other Healthcare Support Occupations	2,340	370	290	40	12.4%
Agricultural Workers	1,510	110	230	10	15.2%

The Agency, Broome County's economic development agency, commissioned a comprehensive workforce analysis for Broome County in 2016[12], providing a trove of data and information that need not be reiterated for the purposes of this report. One key workforce gap they report is the estimate that

[12] Payne, Susan, *Broome County Workforce Data Analysis*, Commissioned by The Agency, Broome County, November 2016

Broome County has 4,859 vacant positions and 5,000 employable people without jobs.[13] Respondents reported having difficulty hiring throughout the counties in the CFSCNY region.

Workforce Barriers

Respondents were asked to describe the primary reasons jobs are going unfilled and what issues might be preventing workers from becoming employed.

Transportation

By far, the most frequently mentioned barrier to employment is a lack of transportation, particularly for lower-income workers. Access to transportation is considered an issue for all the counties in the CFSCNY region. A Tioga County respondent said, *"Because we are a rural community, transportation issues are pretty big for lower income folks."* A respondent from Delaware County reported, *"It's such a huge area and getting to the jobs, unless you live right where the factory is, [can be a challenge]."* A Broome County respondent said, *"We don't necessarily have a concentration of industry in a single place any more. People who have to be able to get to Willow Run or Lockheed Martin require either predictable transportation or a car. And if they don't have a car, and many people don't, then it becomes a very serious issue for them. I've been in many meetings where the CEOs of industry say we can't hire people who can't guarantee they will be at work every day. It's a nasty conundrum."*

> *"We deal with [transportation challenges] constantly with participants in the job training program. They are offered a job, but can't take it because the bus line doesn't go there or they don't have a vehicle or have fines that they can't pay."*

Broome County has the most robust public transportation system, but even its transit system only provides service until 10:00pm, effectively eliminating public transportation for any workers assigned to second or third shifts. Neither Delaware County nor Tioga County have public transit systems.

Table 10. Public Transportation Details by County

County	Number of Routes	Earliest Departure/Arrival Times
Broome	18	6:00AM/10:00PM M-SU
Chenango	6	6:20AM/5:05PM M-SU
Delaware	None	
Otsego	7	6:00AM/6:00PM M-F
Tioga	None	

[13] Broome County Workforce & Talent Attraction Strategic Action Plan 2017-2020, Progress Report: Laying the Foundation for Success, March 2019.

Child Care

Respondents noted that the lack of affordable child care is an additional barrier to employment for all income levels. One respondent from Broome County said, *"I think [child care] was more latent than people understood. It's not only the people who can't afford to get into the workforce, [others calculate the] opportunity cost. It's a trade off and it shouldn't be. It shouldn't be that I won't work for three more years until my child is school age. It should be something that's an intentional choice for someone."* A respondent also addressed the cost of care versus wages saying, *"If you do the math, is making net $50 to work worth it versus staying home with your kid?"* A respondent from Delaware County noted the combined challenges of child care and transportation for some families. She said, *"We have young men and women who have children and there's no child care. It's less expensive to stay home than it is for them to work and pay for child care and worry about transportation to a provider who may be 20 miles away. It debilitates the available workforce and debilitates any workforce training because you have to have the bodies to train."*

The Family Enrichment Network collects and provides extensive information on their child care referral program which shows that in the counties they serve (Broome, Chenango and Tioga) there is an unmet need for child care for 8,727 children.

Table 11. Child Care Providers and Unmet Need for Child Care by County

County	Number of Child Care Providers	Unmet Need Under 5 years	Unmet Need 5-12 years
Broome	102	1,587	3,459
Chenango	43	609	1,175
Delaware	35	-	-
Otsego	-	-	-
Tioga	27	701	1,196

Wages

Respondents noted that low wages are a barrier to employment for the workforce generally, but most especially for lower-skilled workers. One respondent said, *"If you can't have a living wage, how are you going to pay for transportation, child care, and housing? There's an investment you have to make in most cases to be in a position to work. And the larger economics of employment show that if you're a young worker with kids, the math doesn't work. I think that's a huge barrier. I think we get people into the workforce at substandard rates of pay and we think it's all good, but it's not true. They're still poor and still one paycheck away from not being able to work if they get ill and have no sick leave or their car breaks down or they lose child care."* A Binghamton-based respondent said, *"We're seeing gentrification and the cost of living has gone up, but what people are being paid really hasn't gone up. For a family in this area to live in Binghamton to have half a house is $1,000 just for your rent. I remember that you could find it for $550 or $750. That time is gone. If you can't work outside the town in the manufacturing facilities, you're working at the local businesses that are not paying you enough to live."*

> *"I think our wages are low for our cost of living. Things are more expensive and our wages don't match that. It's across the scale. Now we are seeing wages rise for the first time and I think that's being forced by the tight labor market. It's good. But it needs to come up a lot more."*

For higher skill positions, low wages may also serve as a barrier with regard to attracting professionals to the area from larger metropolitan areas. One respondent said, *"It's hard to encourage people to move back for 30% less if they see the cost of living as being the same."*

There is some data to support the idea that low wages and high cost of living may affect young professionals' decision to move to the area. MIT has created an estimate of the wages required to meet basic needs such as housing, transportation, food, health care, and child care for each county in the nation[14]. Comparing the living wage estimate to Census data show all counties except Tioga have a greater gap than New York State between median income and the wage required to meet basic needs. The median age of county residents is lower than New York State's median age.

Table 12. Living Wage Estimate and Median Household Income and Age by County

County	Living Wage Needed to Meet Basic Needs (2 adults both working, 1 child)	Median Household Income	Difference between Income and Cost of Basic Needs	Median Age
Broome	$57,706	$49,064	-$8,642	39.6
Chenango	$56,831	$48,567	-$8,264	44.4
Delaware	$57,241	$47,921	-$9,320	47
Otsego	$58,404	$51,254	-$7,150	42
Tioga	$57,706	$57,153	-$553	44
NYS	$67,419	$64,894	-$2,525	36.6

Drug Testing

> *"The employers I speak to have 40% of prospective employees failing drug tests."*

Respondents said drug testing is a significant barrier for some people who might otherwise wish to join the workforce. One respondent said, *"I think drug testing is actually an issue. Particularly marijuana testing. I've been advocating that we might need to relax that standard, particularly if New York legalizes marijuana. The only employer I have first hand knowledge of has been resistant. Safety is an issue. The problem is that testing for alcohol has a shorter time window. You can test for alcohol on a Monday morning and be clean even if you've been out all weekend, but you can't do that with marijuana. You're going to preclude people from the workforce and discourage them from trying if we can't get a better handle on that. If you have a work injury and somebody tests positive, you have a huge issue. I understand it's a big problem for employers. But I think on the employee's side to try to relax that standard [would be good]. I think they want to work, but are afraid to try because of the parameters the test covers."* Another respondent said, *"Nobody can pass the drug test. Everybody is smoking pot and [it's difficult for people] to be motivated enough to not smoke pot for 30 days to get that job. Nobody tests me to see whether I drink wine on the weekend. As far as recreational use of marijuana, as long as you're going to keep that as a barrier to somebody getting a job, you are eliminating a very large employee base."*

[14] Living Wage Calculator, MIT, https://livingwage.mit.edu/

Messaging

A number of respondents said that there are challenges with respect to messaging which contributes to workforce challenges. One respondent noted that there are difficulties with how job openings are disseminated to potential job candidates. She said, *"While we may get a lot of applicants, they're not really the right fit. I think part of that is the function of how we recruit now. Nobody reads the paper any more. We are using Indeed and through the Chamber and United Way. When it comes to the Indeed site, we get inundated by applications. Some candidates don't even realize their applications got forwarded on."*

Another respondent reinforced the idea that employers aren't able to effectively inform people of jobs. She said, *"I think knowledge of what's out there is the biggest gap. We're hearing from companies [that have] entry level jobs that they don't care what skills they have, they want to train. They want somebody who can show up on time and can pass a drug test. They want to train their people, but people don't know those opportunities are available. An entry level job isn't necessarily a living wage, but a couple years down the road plus training from the company, it can be. I think that's the biggest issue. I think there are people who want the opportunities, but don't know where to go. I think the companies have a hard time communicating what opportunities they have and really what they're looking for. A lot of times it's a bunch of bullet points of what someone will have to do, but really they want somebody who can do basic math and be able to work."*

Another respondent said that local organizations are not recruiting at the universities early or often enough to recruit professional level employees. He said, *"Those big firms go to Binghamton University and start socializing top performers in the first year. They have internships and job offers by senior year. If any local companies thought they were going to go to the event center and get candidates, they're wrong. The top graduating seniors don't go to career fairs because they've been gobbled up by firms that have very aggressive recruitment strategies. There are very intensive strategies to come to universities to attract people to other places. The competition factor is very large and I don't think many organizations understand how intense and intentional it is. If you're an organization that's not even sponsoring internships, you don't have an early foot in the door."*

Other respondents noted that potential applicants may not understand the full value of a compensation package when job searching. She said, *"One of the challenges I have is that every single position in this district has a top of the line health plan that goes with it that has a value of $24,000. Plus, a guaranteed pension and guaranteed health plan in retirement. We may not be able to pay the teachers as much as they pay in Westchester or Long Island, but that health plan is heads above [what they would get elsewhere]. They don't understand. The Wall Street Journal had a piece where they suggested it goes on people's W-2 if you were taxed on the benefit. At the very least put it on to show people it's part of the compensation package."*

Some respondents said the community has prevalent messaging encouraging young people to move away. He said, *"I think we adults, moms and dads, and to a degree, ourselves in education, encourage kids to go to college and go away and that's got to stop. I think there is a lot of education that needs to take place. We have really good jobs here. Our kids are moving away and our businesses and industries are going to go away too."* Several respondents noted that there is an incorrect assumption of a lack of job opportunities in their community. One respondent from Chenango County said, *"There's a perception that there aren't jobs here and I know that's completely false. There is an incredible number of pretty high paying jobs not being filled."*

Population Size

As with the Leadership Gap, respondents noted the declining population is an issue related to workforce. One respondent from Broome County said, *"There are a lack of bodies who are willing and able to work."* A respondent from Chenango County said, *"I think it's the demography question. Our population is dwindling slightly. Not falling off a cliff, but getting a little smaller. The part that's shrinking is the part that you want as the mainstay of your workforce. Just as an example, we have an arm of GE that started out as a locally founded company. A year ago, they won an opportunity to do aircraft sensors and created 70 jobs. There are still 30 available. They can't find anyone around here to fill those jobs."*

Data from the Census Bureau shows that the population in each of the counties in CFSCNY's region is declining as compared to New York State and the United States as a whole. In addition, labor force participation of the work-age population is lower in all counties except Tioga.

Table 13. Population by Year and Labor Force Participation Rate by County

County	2010	2018	Labor Force Participation Rate (Ages 20-64)
Broome	200,675	191,659	74.2%
Chenango	50,511	47,536	74.6%
Delaware	47,963	44,527	73.4%
Otsego	62,277	59,749	76.1%
Tioga	51,049	48,560	78.8%
NYS	18.28M	19.59M	77.3%
US	309.3M	327.2M	77.2%

Skills

A number of respondents mentioned skill gaps are an issue within the workforce, particularly with "soft skills" such as reliability and understanding work culture. One respondent said, *"I don't think a lot of every day people know how to maintain a job and find balance in family life. Things like getting to work and understanding work culture, what a position entails and what [they would] be doing at a job."* Another respondent said, *"I think soft skills, there's a lack of that. Kids are coming out of high school and college, not being able to look you in the eye, prioritize, problem solve, communicate in person, show up, stay at work. We have a lot of people say, just get people in, but they don't know what it means to have a job and be effective."*

A couple of respondents said they thought specific skills gaps were a challenge. One respondent said, *"We're seeing a lot of folks who have been laid off from manufacturing positions and can't use a computer to fill out a job application. We are teaching folks to use a mouse."*

Other Barriers

Some other barriers to having a sufficient workforce mentioned by respondents include:

- Lack of Collaborative Efforts - *"We are looking at each of the problems as singular and all working on our own solutions. One company is doing transportation on their own, but it may be a larger fix and no one is leading that conversation. I'm not sure there's enough trust that politics wouldn't derail it. We're often doing our own thing. We're not really working together."*
- Lack of Activities and Events - *"I think in general, it's a challenge recruiting to this region because there's nothing for people to do here. They can only go to the Colonial so many times. My own children are cases in point. They both live in metropolitan areas which have lots more for [20 and 30-year-olds] to do."*
- Criminal Backgrounds – "*I had a resident I was working with. He was hired; he had stable transportation. And a week went by, he'd taken the drug test and passed. He had done everything he needed to do and was offered the position. [But then they said] 'unfortunately we cannot employ you because of a felony charge from five years back. Come back to us when it's seven years out.' I think these conversations are budding, but I think people could have more of these discussions and see we have able-bodied persons to fill the job, and if you want this position filled, [eliminate the] arbitrary rules."*
- Inflexible Employer Policies (i.e. scheduling, child care, H1B VISA sponsorship) - *"I would say one other thing, inflexibility with scheduling. And I think that comes with a shift in what employees expect at this point. The world has changed. From the employee perspective, there are a number of things they're juggling. Those strict 8am - 5pm schedules aren't feasible. I have appointments, life, but I also know that I'm going to be checking my email at seven at night. I left my previous job after one year. I had a baby 6 months into the job. They knew I was pregnant, they only gave me 6 weeks of leave, I worked 8am to 5pm with an hour at lunch. I had no flexibility and it didn't work for me. I was miserable and took a salary cut of half to come work for 30 hours a week with flexibility. Having extra money would be nice, but I don't regret it. The time that I have with my son - I have a second on the way - it's much more valuable. My [old] job is still open. If they could have been more flexible, I absolutely would have stayed."*
- Funding – (i.e. for translation services, green card renewals; money to pay off old student loan debt, fund business start-up costs)
- Housing
- Immigration and Civil Service Laws
- Regional Issues (i.e. taxes and regulations)
- Non-Committal Workforce - *"Some people take a job because they want a paycheck for a little while, and go on vacation, quit and reapply when they get back. It's that kind of environment. It seems like people think so much is disposable."*

Current Programs

Respondents reported a substantial number of programs and activities that address workforce issues in their county.

Internal training programs

Respondents noted that several organizations have internal training programs where they are able to grow their own workforce.

School-Based Programs

- DCMO BOCES has developed a program linking secondary schools with businesses and changing high school curricula to include skill and micro-credential acquisition.
- Binghamton University has a program, Binghamton University Community Schools (BUCS), which brings university students into pre-college classrooms to help children from low-income families improve their educational outcomes.
- The Broome County Chamber of Commerce has a program connecting high school students to work opportunities in the area.

Community-Based Organization Training Programs

Several community-based organizations, including CHOW, VINES, ACCESS VR, and NAACP, have job training programs for specific population groups.

Issue Based Efforts

Respondents noted there are some additional groups collaborating on workforce issues including child care, transportation, and other infrastructure-related needs.

County Workforce Agencies

Each county has a Workforce Development Board which endeavors to coordinate employment, training, and educational resources, as well as help connect employers to job seekers. In addition, Broome County has The Agency which focuses on workforce issues.

Missing Pieces

Respondents noted some challenges related to workforce activities including:

- Projects focused too narrowly on small populations which were redundant to other programs in place
- A lack of training and support options for the population that is 24-years-old and older
- In-class training that does not provide vital on-the-job experience

Strategies

Training

Respondents noted the need for more training, specifically in soft skills, for both young people as well as people not currently in the workforce. One respondent said, *"I think there needs to be more opportunities for people to build up their skills and do what they need to be prepared for entry level jobs."*

Employer policies

Respondents noted that employers would be better served in being more flexible with hours, past criminal behavior, and working remotely.

Measures of Success

Indicators

Respondents noted that updating statistics to include the diminishing number of unfilled positions in conjunction with the unemployment rate would be a positive indicator of success. They also suggested an increase in population size would be indicative of progress.

Other respondents said that the retention of current businesses in their respective counties, as well as the number of young people staying in those communities, would also be important measure of improvement.

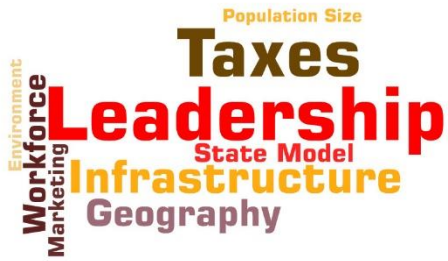
> *"I think there would be higher levels of employment, longer stretches of employment, less insecure employment, and employers would see a stronger benefit of an investment in employees."*

Respondents said that other community indicators such as homeownership, poverty rates, and food insecurity rates could show whether progress has been made in the workforce, as well.

Economic Development

Barriers to Economic Development

Respondents noted several barriers to economic development in their respective counties including a lack of cohesive leadership, an insufficient workforce, an uninviting environment, high taxes, infrastructure challenges, and the state's competitive economic development model.



Leadership Gap

Respondents most frequently said that their county lacked leadership and vision around economic development. A respondent from Broome County said, *"There is a tremendous opportunity to address economic development, but we have not done that as a community. We don't have a leadership for it, and we need to get that."*

Respondents noted that there was a lack of coordinated efforts around economic development activities between localities. A respondent from Delaware County said, *"One of my biggest issues with Delaware County leadership is [the lack of interest] to do county-wide planning around tourism. We are a destination county. We have a lot of people come up, but there are no coordinated efforts in the towns. Even something as basic as signage. If you want to address that, it's like 'you're trying to control our town'. No, we are trying to create a more user-friendly region. It comes back to the part-time, elderly leadership. We're not going to talk about things that enrich and broaden opportunities in the community. We do roads and bridges."*

> *"As much as we think we built a one-stop shop for economic development, we haven't. City of Binghamton has its own office, Endicott-Union has its own. Sometimes they work together, sometimes they don't. Some of it is political. We share information at the last minute and expect each other to get on board. And again, the University is always in the background, also holding onto information and not sharing until they know they have all the funding they want, and the rest of the community can get what's left."*

Respondents said there is a lack of investment in economic development by their leaders. A respondent from Chenango County said, *"Our county funds economic development at [a quarter of Delaware County's investment]. Delaware has a bed tax on lodging and that tax pays for economic development. Chenango doesn't have that tax. Chenango has a dearth of hotel properties. The one in Norwich is terrible. We lose $800,000 a year to surrounding counties because our main hotel property is so terrible. The county folks said that without a landmark property to attract visitors, it's not worth it to collect [a bed tax]."*

Respondents also said they felt their leaders are lacking vision and were too reliant on older methods of economic development. A respondent from Tioga County said, *"I think Tioga County has largely been an agricultural county for a long time. Now that agriculture nationally has taken a different spin, the county has tried to bring jobs in more creatively, but their way to do that is to bring in corporations like FedEx,*

"I think any time I've gone to meetings about economic development and hear what people would like to see in the community, it's never about the community members. When we talk about economic equality, are we talking about redistribution of wealth or people advancing their careers? There are a lot of different things. But when we talk about it, a lot of those meetings are people who look at economic development with a point of view of putting up student housing or opening new businesses when we're looking at restoring faith in our economy and helping people get ahead."

bigger corporations. I don't really like that. I understand why that's happening - it's a very secure, very established, routine way of creating jobs and keeping jobs and having money in the area - but I think I'm not really big on big business. It doesn't really flow money into the community. I think the county is trying to figure that piece out."

Other respondents said the leaders in their community were limiting who was allowed in the conversations about economic development. A respondent from Broome County said, *"I think there's also that group of good old boys that control a lot of economic development projects, so fresh, new ideas are squashed from the beginning. It's rare that there is anyone under 30 in those conversations. When we [make decisions about] residential housing, we don't even include people of those demographics in the conversation."*

Lack of Workforce

Several respondents said a key barrier to economic development is the lack of sufficient workforce in their community. One respondent said, *"If we don't have the qualified bodies that employers are looking for when they're considering site selection, they'll go elsewhere."* Another noted, *"We need fresh, young people with good skill sets and a good education. At the School of Management at the university, 80-85% are from Long Island, and 80-85% go right back. If we aren't retaining them and not recruiting them, where is our talent going to come from?"* Another respondent speaking on behalf of Delaware, Chenango and Otsego counties said that if each county can't provide current businesses with a sufficient workforce, it doesn't make sense to attempt to attract new businesses. He said, *"I think people are starting to realize that some counties are doing better than others. Our problem is sustainability, not growth. I think our Chambers in the past have looked at growth only. That's got to stop. Until we change the workforce problem, it's not going to behoove us to have economic development folks bring in new industries. We can't fill jobs we have available now. That's the biggest issue we have right now. Our Chambers need to refocus on sustainability rather than bringing in new industries."*

Infrastructure Issues

Respondents also frequently noted a lack of sufficient and appropriate housing as a barrier to economic development in their county. A respondent from Tioga said, *"We lack housing for all levels of income. I think that's what Best Buy and Tioga Downs are seeing. We are in the middle of nowhere, someone might want to work for us, but there is no housing. We keep trying to build affordable housing, but then people call it low-income housing and people fight it. There's a fear that people are going to move up from New York City. So, what if they do? And what do you do first? Build the company and hope they come? Or build the housing that they want to live [in] and hope they find a job?"* Another Tioga County respondent noted the housing issue is made worse, in part, by the lack of municipal water and sewer services. A

"Otsego County has very little access to the internet. When I tell colleagues from NYC what I have to go through to work at home [they are shocked]. I still have a satellite dish with only so much bandwidth. I think businesses struggle with that."

respondent from Broome County said, *"Housing is an issue. I can say in my experience in relocating back to this area, trying to find something that suited me was near impossible. When you look at the costs of student and young professional accommodations, it's more than a mortgage would be. The things that are left are poor quality and not safe. And it does seem the taxes for houses are astronomical. It seems unattainable to make that jump to the next stage."*

Transportation was also mentioned several times by respondents as a key infrastructure issue in their county. A respondent said, *"One of the biggest issues we deal with is transportation. It's a Catch-22 with the industrial park. There are no bus lines at certain times because nobody uses them, but nobody uses them because they're not there. It's difficult for folks to get to jobs if they don't have their own car or can't carpool. I think transportation would make a huge difference. Willow Run has a shuttle. We placed a gentleman there a year and a half ago and he still works there because of the shuttle program. From what I know, it has been a huge benefit to those employees."*

"The fact that I will go to Ithaca to get on a plane - that I can't get on one in Binghamton - that affects a lot of businesses. I think that's a big challenge. I can't tell you the last time I flew out of Binghamton."

A respondent from Chenango County noted several infrastructure challenges associated with the rural nature of their county. He said, *"A lot of economic development is driven by interstate highway access and we don't have that. Energy is another one. Right now, in Chenango County, unless you're in a handful of communities that have natural gas, we don't really have it. The pipeline we do have is at capacity. On cold days in the winter, all the big industries that rely on it have to switch to fuel oil because there's not enough [natural gas]. Nobody wants to build gas pipelines. It's just a non-starter. That's a huge limitation. It's the same with sewer and water. They stop at the big population centers. The industrial park will never be anything because we can't extend those services."*

Unappealing Community Environment

Respondents noted the community environment is a barrier which limits economic development in their county. One Broome County respondent said there is, *"a lack of cultural things that drive people to say I want to work in this community. Not many people move to Binghamton because they want to be here. The community is not a draw for people."*

Other respondents said there is a lack of investment in their community that made it unappealing. A respondent from Tioga County said, *"We lack amenities. County government is very small. We don't have any county parks, there's no county run nursing home, no county municipal sewer and water."* Another respondent said, *"I think there are a lot of areas that need help in terms of being visually beautiful. It's challenging not having walkable space. People are less likely to drive to and use a local business that's not easy to get to. There are streets that have been shut down for a year."*

"A lack of investment in our public schools is one of the biggest barriers. And a lack of investment in social programs that help people really make a transition from living in poverty to being able to be where they want to be."

Taxes

A number of respondents said high taxes and over-regulation are significant barriers to economic development in the region. One respondent said, *"I know the Chamber has worked hard to sell the area, but I think they're all looking and hoping to land new businesses. It's a difficult battle when you're dealing with over-regulation, tax structure, and property tax structures."*

State Economic Development Model

Respondents also said the state's economic development model discourages collaboration which is a significant hurdle to county efforts. One respondent said, *"The state will give you leads, but then that becomes political and you have counties vying for the same business. For example, a company went up and down the Southern Tier looking for the best deal for several years. They needed power, water, and the benefits from the state. You got Tioga, Chemung, and Broome all vying, all saying we can do this, but then the state comes in and has a lot of power in making decisions about what kind of benefit they can offer depending on the location."*

Other Barriers

Some of the other barriers respondents noted included:

- Geography - the watershed in Delaware County limits the amount of property available for development and creates barriers against tourism
- Marketing and Communication - *"There is still a public perception that economic development is just for rich people. I can see that people don't understand what the incentives are. We have to get over that political problem and perception."*
- Lack of Industry Diversity: *"The biggest challenge is to have more of it. We need more diversity. There are a lot of tech startups; it would be useful to have more robust development in that area. I think while we have made a very important transition from an old industrial economy, but we still have to make another transition to something that has more feet."*
- Small Population: *"We're a small county. We have to go way out of our way to get people's attention that we are a viable option."*
- Wage Regulations
- National and Regional Market Issues

Current Programs

Respondents were asked to identify the programs and activities that are supporting economic development in their counties. Interview respondents from Tioga County noted their very active county planning department which operates as a one-stop shop, integrating both the IDA and tourism office. A Delaware County respondent said their Main Street Bootcamp program has been a positive effort in the community. She said, *"We do a Main Street Bootcamp where we talk about everything - about making a storefront look good and things to stay away from with respect to lighting. We always try to help invent new ways to help small business. You see the mentors getting together with the new businesses and helping and advising. It's a great connective tissue. We often discuss that competition is healthy and clusters mean you have more people will come to that place. It's an ongoing conversation – it's a tough sell to some people. It's worth the conversation. It's got to be continued."* Broome County respondents noted Binghamton University's small business programs have been useful. One respondent said, *"I think that some of the support that's out there for small businesses and entrepreneurs has been helping. There is a lot of potential for small businesses to transform local communities. I think having a culture that's focused on locally-owned businesses rather than chain stores is important and helpful. And it creates*

more community pride." Another said, *"I think the university has been a major driver. Without any question the [Binghamton University] president sees it as one of the major objectives: to have the university in an economically healthy community."*

Strategies

Respondents offered several strategies that they felt would help support economic development in their community including increasing collaboration, supporting more effective communication, making sites ready for development, increasing efforts to support small businesses and agriculture and focusing on retaining current industries.

Collaboration

Several respondents said there should be more emphasis placed on collaborative efforts to support economic development. A Delaware County respondent said, *"I think we should do coordinated tourism development and community planning along with solving our housing problems. But that's not something this county is interested in looking at historically. And that is deadly. There's no place to work and no place to live. I think there would be kids that might want to live here if they could buy or build a house and have a reasonable job here. But there's not a whole lot going on."* A Broome County respondent said, *"We need people working collaboratively - thinking broadly and working across aisles and dreaming together and collaboratively and instead of everybody working in their silos quietly and confidentially. If everybody is dreaming together it's going to happen."*

> *"It ties back into inclusion and equity. Economic development is youth development; it's the same as family development. I think if we were to invest in people, families, and small businesses and give them the tools to feel empowered, that's economic development."*

Respondents noted a need for more people at the economic development table and a need for greater employer engagement. One respondent said, *"I think if employers, especially the bigger ones, were more on board with the initiatives that are going on in the community, we could have more of an impact. And if the employers are on board, you can get young professionals on board. Things like the retention effort: if we really had the employers on board with activities or sponsorships that would keep young professionals in the area, we would make more headway."*

Communication

Respondents also noted a need for cohesive messaging around economic development. One respondent said, *"I don't think it will happen organically. I think you have to have a consistent message of what's available and what it's like here. Outside of what the Chamber is trying to do with positively pitching the area on their website and in communications, I wouldn't say it's a cohesive message from all the different areas that it needs to get out from. We've had some positive things here. We have a lot of student housing going on, the BU programs now downtown with the incubator are positive. I do think everyone is trying to be optimistic and think of ways to improve the situation. I think if there was some cohesive way of pulling people together and [getting] a consistent, positive message to the area, [that would be good.]"*

Site Development

A handful of respondents noted there is an opportunity to focus on properties that are available and make them ready for development. One respondent said, *"I think we have so many old and vacant*

properties. I think we should make a coordinated and concerted effort to raze those, rebuild, and have some sort of shovel-ready, business-ready facilities that could actually provide immediate access to new opportunities." Another said, *"I would love to take some of these [abandoned] warehouses and turn them into a business training center. We have so many spaces available left in dire, drab condition. They could be revitalized and community-driven."*

Main Street/Small Business Focus

Some respondents suggested an economic development strategy focused on small businesses. One respondent said, *"I think in this community there's an emphasis in economic development on trying to attract large corporations to the area instead of trying to grow the small businesses that exist here that could someday become larger companies. There are a lot of small businesses that employ folks in an ethical way and provide a living wage and benefits. It's interesting the lengths people will go to attract large corporations with low wages and no benefits. I think there is a piece missing for small business. The difference between the incentives offered to big corporations and small business is stark. And that sense of place is what will ultimately attract businesses and young professionals to the area."*

> *"I think our main streets are the key to sustainable economic development."*

Invest in Agriculture

Respondents from the more rural counties in the CFSCNY region noted a need for a more sophisticated investment in agriculture. One respondent said, *"I think we have to look at investing in our agricultural sector in ways that are not exploiting, but regenerative. We have a crisis of labor and caring for natural resources in rural areas. We have to work to re-envision what ag can look like. I think to ignore agriculture, forestry, and natural resources is stupid. It's one of the few assets we have and we really need to be smart about how we build on that."* Another respondent said, *"We need to get smart about aggregating. We need to invest more in supporting local food hubs. Food hubs can create a critical role for farmers to get better a price. We're creating bigger market opportunities, creating supply at volume to meet market demands."*

Focus on Retention

Respondents said there should be more focus on retaining current industry than drawing in new development. One respondent said, *"I wonder to myself sometimes do we need to grow anymore? We are what we are. We've got the businesses, everybody who wants a job has a job – you may be underemployed and have to work more than one job – but we're sustaining what we have now."*

Community Self-Perception

Early on in the interviews, a theme emerged suggesting that a community's self-perception has a not-insignificant impact on how and whether that community moves forward. As a result, an additional question was included at the end of the interviews to get a sense of respondents' views of their own community's self-perception and the impact they feel it has had on its growth.

Self-Image

The Gallup organization conducts interviews with adults across the US to examine well-being in communities across five dimensions. Binghamton's ranking and score declined substantially between the 2015-2016 report and the 2016-2017 report. Of particular note is that Binghamton has scored consistently very low on the community dimension, which is the area that encompasses liking where you live, feeling safe, and having pride in your community.

Table 14. Binghamton's Ranking on the Gallup Well-Being Index

Dimensions	**Binghamton, NY**	
	2015-2016 Ranking out of 189 cities	**2016-2017 Ranking out of 186 cities**
Purpose: liking what you do each day and being motivated to achieve your goals	158	184
Social: having supportive relationships and love in your life	52	127
Financial: managing your economic life to reduce stress and increase security	44	96
Community: liking where you live, feeling safe, and having pride in your community	**188**	**184**
Physical: having good health and enough energy to get things done daily	89	147
Overall rank	161	182

Negativity

About 44% of interview respondents echoed the Gallup results in believing their community has a negative self-image. For the most part, respondents said the negativity stems from a focus on the past and a lack of belief in the future. A respondent from Broome County said, *"I travelled a bit for a job, but other than that I've always been a Broome County resident. I think many people who have lived here, grown up here, had families that were successful when the county was booming. And now that's gone. I think the perception of the county is that it can never be successful again. What was is no longer. But that's absolutely not true. We have so much to offer. We still have manufacturing and those governmental engineering-type employers, but at the same time we have locally-owned restaurants that don't compare to anywhere else in area. Check out downtown Binghamton and see what's on offer. We have great places to visit."*

A Generation Y respondent said the tendency to look back is tied to a tendency to resist diversity. She said, *"I like the word 'perception'. You do have the baby boomers, IBM'ers, that saw [Binghamton] as a booming town. Maybe in the 1920's it was, but I grew up here and I don't remember glitz and glamour. I think the influx of people from different parts of the state and the country creates a perception that neighborhoods have gone downhill. There's a lot more to do in Binghamton now than 15 years ago. I don't remember Binghamton being anything amazing. I do think there's a lot of race stuff and perception*

that because we're a more diverse community that we are somehow a less safe community. Yes, there's blight and empty properties, but overall the community perception is that Binghamton isn't what it once was. I have a different perception of what people have brought to the community. There are people in the county that haven't been to Binghamton in 20 years because of the perception that you can't go to downtown. I don't think it's the parking. There's a large close-minded, very conservative view. It's not 1950 and some people have not let go of that ideal."

In the rural counties, respondents noted the insular aspects of their small populations. A Tioga County resident said, *"I think the community views itself as a tight-knit, small-town, rural community and they're not shy about saying they like the way it is and they don't want change."* A Delaware County respondent said, *"Unfortunately, we are rather tribal here. You have those people. And you have those people. And you have these people. And they don't necessarily cross-pollinate. I think it's a mosaic that is not grouted together. It's 'take care of your little patch and go on with your business'."*

A Mix of Good and Bad

A nearly equal number of respondents, (42%), said their community has a mix of positive and negative outlooks. One respondent said, *"It depends on who you ask. I think people who are natives, who have low opportunity and not much education, are going to have a very negative view of the community. The days of squeaking through high school and getting a living wage from the shoe factory are no more. The opportunities for that cohort are really limited and you're going to find a negative view of the community with how opportunity has changed for those folks. If, however, you are a returnee and that was an active decision on your part, [the area is] safe, natural, has close access to New York City. There are a lot of those people that love it here who are occupying good employment opportunities and who take advantage of everything the community has to offer."* A respondent from Chenango County said, *"I think it's a mixed bag. I think it really depends on who you're talking to. You'll have some people who are engaged. They're more optimistic than ever that we can get things done and that we're moving forward and leading the charge, trying to tackle some of these challenges. There are clearly people who fall into that trap of, 'well, we're just a small poor rural community, we're not going to be able to change that, it is what it is'."* A young professional said, *"The lens or perspective we look at our community with depends on the individual you are asking. To those who grew up here, they are too nostalgic in their memories, and it robs the current community from celebrating their achievements. Those that have moved here or tend to be young are more aware of all the good going on and wanting to be a part of the turnaround story. We have a lot of people who are willing to acknowledge the challenges, but are not as open to thinking of solutions in different ways or empowering others who may have different ideas."*

"I think it's a mixed bag. We have a lot of things around here to be excited about and to have some pride in, but we also have some headwinds that are very strong. How we respond is going to determine where we go as a region."

It's Getting Better

A handful of respondents said their community's self-perception is improving. A Gen X respondent from Broome County said, *"I think we're turning a curve to really have a more positive attitude. I think we're getting there. I think we've seen development. We were able to get the downtown restaurant scene thriving and some of our rural communities, such as Whitney Point, are doing excellent things. When we start to see little things like that, it's a motivator for us all to do better. Some of us no longer want to put up with that old narrative. I honestly think that narrative will continue to shift. Some of the older generation is in the way. It's this idea of power, of money, of who's who – a lot of younger generation don't care who you are, but if you're going to get something done, I'm totally on board. Many of my friends are not involved in the community. They don't know who the mayor is and don't care. What they care about is that their kids are in good programs, whether they are getting what they need out of their jobs and if they have a good quality of life here. They don't care who is in office and they don't care if you have money. We don't want to see kids go home hungry. We want there to be programs for kids in summer that don't have meals. I think we recognize these things and are not tight with our pocketbook."*

> *"I think it's shifting for the better. It's been an important shift. I think we have a very strong immigrant, cultural, bootstrap mentality here. Obviously, that has shifted, and the look has changed, but it still is there. I think that's going to be our success. It's shifting from the Italian and European immigrants that were willing to pitch in for Endicott-Johnson, to now, where you've got entrepreneurs who are interested in the low cost of living with strong agricultural benefits and the increasing desire for organic stuff and wineries, breweries, farm-to-table. I think there are a lot of opportunities here to promote all that. I've seen it and you can feel it spill into that same energetic vibe with new places opening up downtown. It's a transition – it's been really hard, but it's happening. I think we have a long way to go. There are lot of challenges and it's hard to get people to see the bright side of things. But that's the way we're moving."*

A Gen Y respondent noted the difference between the people trying to improve the community and those who sit on the sidelines and complain. She said, *"If you go the local newspaper's Facebook page and read the comments for any article at any topic, you'll be depressed for the next two months. I think the perception of the community is twofold: there is a group of creative folks opening businesses, starting festivals, doing good work, and shifting the perception of the community. But there is a group of folks lurking in the forums that have nothing but negative things to say about the community. I'd say the collective perception is negative, but I think it's starting to shift because of the cultural events and businesses that are starting to grow."*

Positive Outlook

A small number of respondents said they thought their community self-perception was generally positive. A respondent from a small community in Broome County said, *"I think they think very highly of themselves and I think they support themselves very well. While we are small, we are mighty. When kids go to school, they learn to be very supportive. It's definitely an asset within the community. The United Way just had a community conversation and one of things the [participants] noted was how positive they were and how much they supported each other. It's unique to the community."* Another Broome County resident noted, *"Our sense of community is incredible. I always thought we had a great sense of community, but during the flood of 2011 I saw how the community came together. And think of the [United Way] Days of Caring with over 100 projects and 1,400 volunteers in two days. That's amazing. People lose sight of that. And there's not a shortage of beautiful places to go. [The county is] what we make of it and if we're not participating, if we're not building up to replace those things that have been lost, it won't grow, and it won't be amazing. It's up to all of us to change the perception."*

> *"There is an older generation in Cooperstown that is very invested in, engaged with, and love their community. Because it's a place they have a fondness for, they've invested a lot in ensuring it's a community that continues to be somewhere they want to live. They have the economic ability to volunteer or be engaged civically. I think people within this community see themselves as enlightened, liberal, civically engaged and it's what they value. And they have the ability to invest in creating that kind of environment. When you meet them, you can tell. They've always been people who are hard-working, caring, have good values and it's just been innately a part of them. I think communities attract the kind of person that feels comfortable in that kind of community and perpetuates that identity."*

Respondents from Delaware County said there is a new, positive energy in the county that is leading to improvements, including downtown revitalization efforts. One respondent said, *"I would say of the communities we deal with, 99.9% have a great self-perception. They see the potential. They get incredibly frustrated because the county is constantly on a roller-coaster with the watershed, but I have no doubt they love their communities and think it's the best."*

A Tioga County resident said, *"I think the county and towns and villages for the most part have a very positive self-perception. The county and village of Owego bounced back from a devastating flood where 85% of the village was underwater. The village has worked very hard to recover from that. They've done a lot of innovative things. Just this year we've had two inns open up. A lot of the local organizations are doing a lot of things to promote the community with a positive self-image and pride. Over the years, there have been major changes and it's been in a positive direction."*

Impact of a Community's Self-Perception

"I think growing up here, it's always like, 'I can't wait to get out of here and move somewhere else'. Only because I became involved kind of by accident, I realized we have a great community with incredible people and organizations here. People don't know and don't get invested. I think growing up it was always kind of cool to not like Binghamton or Broome County, but when you ask what they don't like, they don't really have an answer. I think that perception gives younger people the motivation to just leave. It causes folks to want to get away and go where the grass is greener.

Respondents nearly universally felt that a community's self-perception has a significant impact on whether and how a community moves forward, noting that a negative self-perception is particularly damaging. One respondent said, *"It's all mindset. Some people are easily influenced by the negative opinions of others and adopt that way of thinking. Some people are educating themselves on what our area has to offer and the good work and plans that are being done. This makes it difficult to produce new ideas for our area when there is negative commentary coming in, regardless of how positive of an effort it is for the community."* A young professional said, *"[It has an] enormous impact. You can't attract people to come to your area if you are negative about it. Negativity about the area is contagious. For young professionals who may have taken a job here, if they start hearing people here say how bad it is, it's poisonous and they immediately start thinking about leaving."*

A Gen Y respondent said, *"I'll be really brutal on this: I'm new to the region in that I didn't grow up here and the community perception is dismal. You have some very, very pessimistic people in the community that think that Upstate is the worst place ever. And I think a lot of those people tend to be middle-aged or older adults. If I were to try to form a hypothesis, I think they enjoyed it here at a younger age. They worked at IBM and had great careers, but as the larger organizations left, they lost those careers, stayed here and hated it. I don't even hear them talk about how it used to be, but they have gotten sour. I haven't heard a lot of younger people talk like that. They all seem more optimistic about life in general. I think the older crowd pushes people away the way they talk about their disdain for the community. As an outsider moving in, the reputation of the region from Long Island is that it's nowhere you'd want to live. All of them come and get their degree and move home. There's this view of Upstate New York from downstate, that downstate is better. With that perception from the college community and a general voice from the older population that this place isn't all that great, it turns workforce away, it turns opportunities away, and it turns the energy and enthusiasm to start a business away."*

"If people have a hopeless view of our area, there is no chance of a positive future for our area going forward."

Conclusion

The interviews conducted for this project provided rich ground for the identification of barriers and opportunities for improvement in four areas: leadership, diversity, workforce, and economic development. Through this process, several areas have been identified where CFSCNY and other organizations could have a positive impact on key elements of regional economic development.

Leadership Gaps

Interview information identified some important challenges related to leadership development including distinct differences in perceptions between generations, the impact the cultural environment has on recruitment, a lack of planning by current leadership, and siloed networks.

Respondents suggested that leadership gaps could be addressed through:

- intentional efforts to bridge siloed networks;
- implementing real-world, effective leadership training around generational differences; and
- developing meaningful mentorship opportunities.

Gaps in Diversity, Inclusion & Equity

Interviews revealed starkly different views on the importance of diversity, inclusion, and equity and the challenges to support diversity in leadership. Data suggest that there are significant opportunities to improve equity across gender, race, and socio-economic status. While a number of respondents said the small population of minorities in their community was a barrier to diversifying leadership, a dive into Census data shows a small, but significant number of people of color who could be tapped for leadership roles, particularly in Broome County. Respondents noted a prevalence of bias, closed cultures, and isolated networks also contributed to challenges with diversity.

Respondents suggested that diversity gaps could be tackled through:

- intentional efforts to bridge otherwise-siloed networks;
- implementing real-world, effective leadership training around cultural differences;
- facilitating community conversations around diversity, inclusion, and equity; and
- developing meaningful mentorship opportunities.

Workforce Gaps

Respondents and data agree that substantial workforce gaps exist in the region. Respondents noted key infrastructure issues, such as housing, transportation, and childcare, present difficult challenges to maintaining a sufficient workforce. In addition, employer practices, such as stringent drug-testing, prohibiting employment due to criminal history, and paying low wages, were identified as prominent challenges.

To address workforce gaps, interviewees suggested:

- collaborative approaches to find solutions to high need workforce problems such as childcare, housing, and transportation.
- opportunities to expand the workforce through revisiting drug-testing criteria and criminal conviction standards. These “second-chance” opportunities could potentially be more effective through robust support from community-based organizations.

Positive Messaging

A key theme throughout the interviews was the impact of negative perceptions and the need for intentional and coordinated positive messaging. Respondents noted several encouraging signs of growth and expansion in their communities. Several respondents suggested there were opportunities to more widely and effectively spread the message of success and build community momentum.

Appendix A. Structured Interview Guide

Introduction: The questions I have are qualitative so I'm looking for your personal experience and opinion on the challenges, current efforts being implemented to address those challenges, what else can or should be done, and how we will know there's been progress. Please be assured that all the information you provide will be kept completely confidential. I will not be quoting anyone by name or organization and will only be reporting in the aggregate.

1) **Impending Leadership Gap** – the assumption I'm working from is that as baby boomers are retiring and there is a continuing population decline in the region, organizations are at risk of not having leaders in the pipeline ready to take over.

    - From your perspective, is this true?
    - What are the challenges and barriers that are preventing a pipeline?
    - What kinds of programs or activities are there taking place that are do you know of that are in place addressing that gap? (are they working?)
    - What would success look like when addressing the leadership gap?

2) **Diversity, Inclusion and Equity** –

    - From your perspective, what is the county climate in terms of diversity, inclusion and equity? (*probe: is there openness to diversity? Are there particular areas where there is problem with diversity?)*
    - What are the challenges and barriers that are preventing diversity and inclusion in leadership positions?
    - What kinds of programs or activities are there taking place that are addressing diversity & inclusion? (are they working?)
    - What would success look like when addressing diversity, inclusion and equity?

3) **Workforce** –

    - From your perspective, are there workforce gaps in your county?
    - What types of jobs are going unfilled, if any?
    - What are the main reasons those jobs are going unfilled?
    - Are there other issues preventing some workers from being employed?
    - What kinds of programs or activities are there that are addressing workforce issues? (are they working?)
    - What would success look like for workforce?

4) **Economic Development** –

    - If you were to identify the biggest challenges or barriers to economic development in your county, what would they be?
    - What kinds of programs or activities are there that are addressing economic development? (are they working?)

Appendix B. Young Professionals' Online Questionnaire

1) Impending Leadership Gap

The assumption we are working from is that as baby boomers are retiring and there is a continuing population decline in the region, organizations are at risk of not having leaders in the pipeline ready to take over. (Leadership can include paid positions and volunteer positions such as on boards of directors.)

From your perspective, is this true?
Yes
No
Unsure

What are the challenges and barriers that are preventing younger professionals from staying in the area/coming to the area?

What are the challenges and barriers that are preventing younger professionals from preparing for and moving into leadership roles?

What kinds of activities do you think would be most helpful in helping you prepare for and move into leadership roles?

What would success look like when addressing the leadership gap?

2) Diversity, Inclusion and Equity

From your perspective, what is the county climate in terms of diversity, inclusion and equity?
What are the challenges and barriers preventing organizations from having a diverse workforce and leadership team?

What kinds of activities do you think would be most effective in encouraging inclusivity and equity in hiring, training and promoting?

What would success look like when addressing diversity, inclusion and equity?

3) Community Self-Perception

How would you describe the community's self-perception?

In what ways do you think that affects how and whether the community moves forward?

What kinds of messages do you think would be most impactful in encouraging people to stay in and/or move to the community? What is the best way to get those messages out?