

SOUTHERN TIER WEST REGIONAL PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021



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Center for Regional Excellence

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

If the past year has made anything more apparent than before, it's the tremendous need for partnerships and collaboration. Every project or program that has made significant changes or progress has done so through previously established partnerships and relationships. STW moved to an entirely on-line training format in 2020 and provided 25 webinars for our municipalities. Many of these had over 40 attendees. We would not have been able to accomplish this without the assistance of all the presenters and their agencies/organizations that allowed them to provide their expertise.

Southern Tier West affiliate organizations continue to operate at full capacity with each board of directors shifting to online meetings. STEDO approved several loans and managed to assist those businesses that needed additional assistance the relief that they needed during a time of struggle. STERA continued to manage the railroad to its fullest extent. The Southern Tier West Development Foundation was a key player and pivoted their focus to administer \$500,000 in grants to assess the local food landscape across the greater portion of Western New York. The Southern Tier NY Angel Fund, LLC continued to make strides in its day-to-day operations assisting entrepreneurs across our region.

Support from our three counties has been unwavering and much appreciated during this past year. We have seen a few board member vacancies appear, which were quickly filled with new members appointed by the county legislature. Staff has also had to adjust to a different work environment, which has been accomplished with few if any issues. I am always appreciative of the support I receive from the staff and board as I continue to guide this organization through the ever-changing landscape of federal, state and local opportunities.

FINANCIAL REPORT

CONDENSED STATEMENTS OF NET POSITION

	2021	2020
Current Assets	\$ 344,986	\$ 294,183
Other Assets	932,020	949,020
TOTAL Assets	\$1,277,006	\$1,243,158
Liabilities	322,820	277,650
TOTAL Net Position	\$ 954,186	\$ 965,509

CONDENSED STATEMENT OF REVENUE, EXPENSES, AND CHANGES IN NET POSITION

	2021	2020
Total Revenues	\$ 963,804	\$ 665,161
Total Expenses	975,127	799,032
Change in Net Position	\$ (11,323)	\$(133,871)

APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION AREA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

This report covers the final application submission phase for the FY 2021 ARC Area Development Program applicants, and the technical assistance and pre-application phase for FY 2022 applicants. An important change to last year's application was a scaffolding process that required applicants to fill out a Letter of Intent (LOI) that was vetted by STW staff before they moved onto completing a preapplication that included a budget, a project narrative, and a timeline. After individual reviews and discussions, the applicants moved to filling out the required ARC forms, submitting letters of support and commitment, along with supplementary and support documents to bolster the application. The FY 2021 funding cycle had eight (8) LOIs from a variety of organizations and local governments. Six (6) of the eight (8) completed pre-applications. Subsequently, Southern Tier West submitted 4 full applications, which were approved by New York State DOS and forwarded to ARC in Washington for final review and possible award contract. The four (4) projects comprised \$449,996 in funding requests for projects totaling \$813,992. The projects supported ARC goals in the areas of Economic Opportunities, Ready Workforce, as well as in Natural & Cultural Assets. Out of those four (4) projects, four (4) were funded. The final pool of successful applicants requested and received \$449,996 in funding for projects that totaled \$813,992.

In early-March 2021, STW hosted two (2) ARC General Information Sessions via Zoom. The virtual meeting was scheduled to comply with the safety precautions due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Roughly thirty (30) individuals from a variety of organizations registered and attended. Participants received an overview and guidelines of the Area Development Program as well as eligibility requirements and suggestions on how to develop a successful project.

STW staff successfully streamlined and scaffolded the application process as noted above. Despite the ongoing pandemic and the trend towards remote and socially distanced work, STW staff has continued to work closely with interested parties and applicants via email, telephone, and teleconferencing systems to flesh out project ideas and explain the revised application process and timeline. Extensive technical assistance in the preparation of the LOI continues to be provided. The final project narratives, budgets, and timelines were presented to the STW board for review. On June 17th, STW resumed the practice of having applicants present their projects to the STW board and to answer questions presented to strengthen applications. All eight (8) applicants were then invited to submit a first draft of the final application due August 27th, 2021. September 24th, 2021 is the internal STW final application due date, after which the applications will be sent to NYS DOS for review and final submission. Staff is currently working with six (6) applicants, including regional institutions of higher education and nonprofits to complete their full, final applications for FY 2022. The final pool of proposals represents \$321,780 in funding requests for projects that total \$764,834. One (1) project supporting ARC's Natural and Cultural Assets goal leverages Marina Park in a struggling rural area of Cattaraugus County.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

EDA CARES ACT GRANT

Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development Board is making the most of EDA funds made available through the CARES Act. There are three components to the expenditure of these funds: (1) development of an Economic Recovery and Resilience Plan, (2) creation of a Web Portal (mapping of development sites and buildings, assistance available to businesses and entrepreneurs, data) along with (3) assistance to businesses.

- **COVID Regional Recovery and Resiliency Plan**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a once-in-a-century global catastrophe and as recovery work continues at both the national and local levels, it is still important to study and assess the pandemic regionally for future planning purposes. First, our study will help us understand the pre and post pandemic positioning and disaster planning of the Western Southern Tier to help restructure the region for not just another disruption, but also the new economy and society emerging post pandemic. As part of this positioning, the unique and localized impacts of COVID-19 on the region will be assessed and then situated in the context of the state, country and even the globe.

In addition to closely monitoring and assessing economic data as it becomes available, thus far almost 50 representatives from human and social service organizations across Allegany, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua counties were surveyed and interviewed about their pandemic experiences along with how they are looking forward.

- **Statebook**

In our information age, data and knowledge are becoming one of the most useful and utilized assets available and with help from the CARES Act, Southern Tier West is building the digital infrastructure to make information immediately and freely available to everyone and anyone. Via the Statebook platform, STW is working to build a public platform sharing information and statistics about the region's Arts & Culture, Climate & Geography, Demographics, Education, Employment, Government, Health, Households & Income, Housing, Incentives, Industries, Lifestyle, Taxation, Transportation, Utilities, Workforce and Site & Buildings. Upon completion of the project, this information will be available for both the region and individual counties, and then incorporated into future strategic planning documents developed by STW and others.

- **Manufacturing Productivity and Improvement Program**

Using funds from the CARES act, the 2020-2021 Manufacturing Productivity Improvement Program pays partial costs for consulting and technical assistance to businesses manufacturing, process improvement, customized training, environmental sustainability and e-commerce to improve the economic viability, productivity, and competitiveness of businesses via workforce training, productivity enhancement, lean manufacturing techniques, advanced marketing assistance, certification initiatives and other consulting services enhancing administrative or operational capacity. So far, over \$68,000 thousand dollars have been approved for three consultants to serve twelve businesses.

COMMUNITY GIS

TRIMBLE GIS DATA COLLECTION

Over the last year, STW worked with the Town of Busti to create a complete signage inventory to be utilized by the town highway department and town planning board. These signage inventories are crucial for small communities to keep track of their signage assets and to provide documentation of sign location and condition. This inventory will be uploaded to Southern Tier West's online GIS site where town officials and highway departments will have instant access to the data, anytime they need it, using an app on their phones!

DRONE BASEMAP CREATION AND DATA COLLECTION

Southern Tier West has increased its GIS capabilities dramatically by adding the DJI Mavic 2 Enterprise Dual drone to its fleet. This drone is much smaller than its predecessor, the Matrice 100, and the Mavic's battery life is almost double that of the Matrice. This allows the Mavic 2 Enterprise Dual the ability to maneuver into tight places impossible for the Matrice to navigate, and also allows the drone the ability to stay airborne twice as long as its predecessor; allowing for much more data to be collected in a single mission. Besides these advantages, the Mavic 2 Enterprise Dual utilizes 2 cameras, simultaneously, when collecting data. The first camera is a standard high-resolution RGB "visual camera", and the second is a Flir high-resolution 640 thermal camera. This thermal camera enables Southern Tier West to explore new GIS possibilities that may lead to new project areas and opportunities. The new drone's RGB camera system has been utilized by STW over the last year during our mapping projects of the Genesee River and Chautauqua Lake. STW plans to utilize the Flir thermal camera technology in upcoming projects and are actively seeking new projects to further utilize our new assets in the future.



Utilizing DJI Mavic 2 Enterprise Dual RGB Camera



Utilizing DJI Mavic 2 Enterprise Dual Flier Thermal RGB Camera

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The 2021 CEDS focuses on linking regional competitiveness to Investment in a knowledge-based economy. The CEDS uses established data-driven analytical techniques to evaluate the region and establish effective strategies for economic development. The CEDS also continues Southern Tier West's other strategic foci, including broadband deployment, financial assistance, infrastructure development, and transportation-based economic development. The CEDS contains lists of strategic economic development projects and includes a section on economic resilience. This document can be found on our website.

NEW YORK SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP (NYSAWG) FOOD SYSTEM PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

New York Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (NYSAWG) is a 501 (c)(3) affiliate organization of Southern Tier West with a mission to develop a strong, resilient, inclusive, and economically vibrant regional food system. NYSAWG strives to fulfill its mission through programming and education, partnerships and collaborative projects, shared resources, and research.

This has been a pivotal year for NYSAWG with expanding programs, developing new regional partnerships, and raising awareness of the organization. NYSAWG was approached by the Western New York Foundation to provide input as to the state of the food system in the Southern Tier, noting any impacts caused by the pandemic, gaps in food system functions, what was working, and what was not working. The inquiry was motivated by a group of WNY philanthropy organizations seeking to better understand reports of increased food insecurity, high demand for local farm products, empty shelves in groceries, increasing food prices, food stuck in supply and distributive chains that had to suddenly cease, and more uncertainties. From the inquiry and many discussions with the Western New York Foundation evolved a regional, 9-county project to assess the state of the region's food system and response strategies to strengthen, stabilize, and sustain the system into the future. The WNY Regional Food System Initiative is colloquially known as the "Food Future WNY" project and is co-lead by the WNY Foundation and NYSAWG, with the Southern Tier West Development Foundation as the fiscal administrator. This initiative has been funded through the Western New York COVID-19 Community Response fund and other regional funders to undertake a comprehensive assessment and planning effort across nine counties: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Monroe, Niagara, Orleans, and Wyoming. Along with the assessment work, the University at Buffalo is developing an online, interactive food system map and NYSAWG is a contributing partner to the process and may possibly host the final website. NYSAWG developed and hosts the project's website: www.FoodFutureWNY.org in addition to our general website and social media under the Fresh Local WNY brand.

The assessment work is being led by a team of consultants over an 18-month period, concluding in June 2022. NYSAWG, along with the many project partners and the Work Group and Regional Advisory Council members have worked closely with the consulting team, planned and attended visits to regional food system businesses and organizations, engaged stakeholders to participate in the process, have built enthusiasm and support for this comprehensive effort: NYSAWG is weaving new and stronger threads in the region's food system fabric through our role as co-lead of this project.

NYSAWG developed four professional development and peer sharing sessions for area farmers market personnel. These "off season" sessions were presented on Zoom and featured a hybrid agenda of special topic presenters, resource sharing, and peer support. Building off the results from the last survey that we conducted for the farmers markets in 2014-2016, staff has developed an updated version of the survey and is attending markets in person to canvas market shoppers. The survey effort will continue into the first few months of next season's market operations. NYSAWG responds throughout the year to calls for assistance and information from the region's farmers markets, farm producers, local food processors, emerging food entrepreneurs, and more.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAM

2021 CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP

PERMA was a corporate sponsor. Municipal Solutions and Wright Specialty Insurance were corporate supporters.

TRAINING

Fall Planning & Zoning Webinars 2020

Beginning September 9, 2020 running through December 2, 2020, Southern Tier West hosted a Planning & Zoning/Code Enforcement Officer Training Webinar Series. The webinars were held every Wednesday with an average of 40 attendees. Continuing Education Credits were offered for Planning & Zoning Board Members and Code Enforcement Officers. The training Webinars included:

- *Planning Board Basics, Wendy Salvati, WWS Planning Services*
- *Zoning: Getting It Right For Your Community, John Steinmetz, Barton & Loguidice*
- *Site Plan Review: Jane Nicholson, MRB Group*
- *Ethics for Water & Wastewater Personnel - Paul Chatfield, MRB Group*
- *SEQR Basics & New Regulations - Ebony Mapp & Patricia Burke, NYSDOS*
- *Zoning Laws for Solar - Drew Reilly, Wendel Companies*
- *Affordable Housing - Anurupa Roy & Paula Gilbert, NYSDOS*
- *Land Surveys 101 - Steve Boddecker, Fisher Associates*
- *Sign Regulation - Chris Eastman & Ebony Mapp, NYSDOS*
- *Team Building for Municipal Sewer & Water - Paul Chatfield, MRB Group*
- *Collaboration Opportunities for Small Drinking Water Water Systems - Heather Himmelburger & Hayley Hajic, SW Environmental Finance Center*

Spring Training Webinars 2021

Southern Tier West hosted a Spring Webinar Series February - May 2021 for municipal officials. Attendance ranged from 20 - 50 participants per webinar. Topics included:

- *Skills That Make Great Board Members - Paula Gilbert & Ebony Mapp, NYSDOS*
- *Planning Board Members: Get What Your Community Deserves - Barton & Loguidice*
- *Planning For A Community Food System - Kimberly LaMendola, Southern Tier West*
- *Administration & Enforcement of Your Zoning To Protect Community Character - Ellicottville, NY*
- *Experiences With Battery Storage With Solar & Stand-Along - Andrew Reilly, Wendel Companies*
- *Tips For Regulating Telecommunications Facilities - Chris Eastman & Paula Gilbert, NYSDOS*
- *Real Property Revals - Daniel Martonis, Cattaraugus County Real Property Department*
- *Project Management: How To Efficiently Complete A Project - Brooke Mayer, MRB Group*
- *Board Members Municipal Ethics - Sarah Brancatella, NY Towns*
- *NYSTCA and IIMC Certification For Municipal Clerks - Allison Vento, Town of Pomfret*
- *Internal Controls & Best Practices for Tax Collection - Leslie Richard, Office of the State Comptroller*
- *Governmental Accounting Essentials Part I & II - John Savash & Barbara Smith, NYSGFOA*

MUNICIPAL WEBSITES

Weebly (mobile-friendly) websites were created for the City of Salamanca, Salamanca IDA, Towns of Dunkirk, French Creek, Great Valley and Harmony. A municipal site was also created for the Town of Mina. Southern Tier West currently maintains 82 municipal websites.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Records reorganization and disposal was provided to the Town of Charlotte, Town of Chautauqua, Village of Fredonia, and Village of Falconer.

NYSERDA - CLEAN ENERGY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

The first round of NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities program closed in 2020 and STW was extremely pleased with the level of participation in the program from our communities. Through the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities program, we were able to assist 25 communities to achieve Clean Energy Community designation, putting over \$1,000,000 in match free grant money into our region to be used toward municipal clean energy upgrade projects. In our three-county region, 61 municipalities participated in the program and 26 earned the Clean Energy Community designation from New York State. The municipalities that earned the designation include:

- Chautauqua County
- City of Salamanca
- Towns of Amity, Ashford, Busti, Conewango, Ellicott, Ellicottville, Ellington, Hanover, Humphrey, Kiantone, North Harmony, Persia, Poland, Pomfret, Randolph, Rushford, Stockton
- Villages of Celoron, Cuba, Falconer, Lakewood, Sherman, Silver Creek, Westfield

One of the most significant outcomes of the Clean Energy Communities program has been the installation of EV Charging Stations in the area. To date, 54 new electric vehicle charging stations have been installed in 27 municipalities over our three-county region.

In early 2021 NYSERDA announced the release of the Clean Energy Communities Leadership Round grant program. This new rendition looks to build from the foundation laid during the original Clean Energy Communities program. While similar in many ways to the original program, the Leadership Round provides communities additional opportunities and paths to access the available match-free grant funding while also offering more options and avenues to achieve Clean Energy Community designation from New York State.

Some of STW's duties associated with the NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities program include, but are not limited to:

- *Attending Municipal Board meetings to discuss the Clean Energy Communities program and assist with any resolutions/local laws that may need to be passed*
- *Assisting communities with understanding and completing the required actions to become "Clean Energy Communities". This designation allowed them to access associated NYSERDA grant resources.*
- *Assisting communities in completing local greenhouse gas emissions inventories, benchmarking the energy use of municipal buildings and assisting communities in reducing greenhouse gas emissions through energy-efficiency upgrades and renewable energy projects.*
- *Assisting communities to become Climate Smart Communities Certified.*
- *Assisting communities in adopting model codes and streamlined clean energy permitting processes.*
- *Assisting communities in increasing the deployment of alternative fuel vehicles and associated fueling infrastructure.*
- *Conducting local on-site training and workshops to groups of interested local officials and community stakeholders on specific clean energy topics.*
- *Identifying and connecting communities with relevant clean energy programs and grant opportunities*

PROGRAM AREAS

BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT

During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, Southern Tier West continued to work on the expansion of broadband across our three-county region. In cooperation with Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties, Southern Tier West was awarded an Appalachian Regional Commission Power Grant in the amount of \$395,000, matched with local cash of \$399,000. During this past year, the grant allowed for expansion of broadband with new LTE antennas on towers in the towns of Otto, Dayton, Perrysburg, Carroll, Kiantone, Poland, Ellery, Arkwright, Yorkshire and Franklinville.

Southern Tier West was awarded an Appalachian Regional Commission POWER grant in the amount of \$423,000 to upgrade the antennas on county towers throughout Allegany County. This application was completed in partnership with Allegany County and the Allegany County Technology Development Corporation. The project will replace older fixed wireless antennas with 2.5 GHZ LTE antennas that provide better coverage in rural Allegany County. This project is in the engineering phase and will be completed in early 2022.

BASELINE

Southern Tier West entered into a contract to continue the Source Water Protection Plan Program within Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua Counties. Staff continues to partner with the three-county Health Departments in the program, which will create or update source water protection plans for several municipalities across our region. Source Water Protection plans are necessary for the protection of the municipal system's water source from contaminants that are difficult and costly to treat through normal means. During this past year, STW continued work with the Village of Portville.

AFFILIATIONS

SOUTHERN TIER WEST ANGEL FUND

Southern Tier West continues to work in coordination with the three County IDA's and Rain Source Management, LLC, with funding through the Appalachian Regional Commission to form the Southern Tier NY Angel Fund, LLC. In October 2020, the fund met with its first potential client. The Southern Tier NY Angel Fund, LLC is comprised of individuals and families as well as a number of institutional members that believe in the economic vitality of our three-county region and currently have an investment portfolio of \$250,000. The fund is currently serving the region of southwestern New York State consisting of Chautauqua County, Cattaraugus County, and Allegany County. The Company will invest with a secondary focus in counties adjacent and contiguous to the primary Region (i.e., Erie County, Wyoming County, Livingston County and Steuben County).

SOUTHERN TIER ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (STEDO)

STEDO provides small and medium-sized businesses access to capital through low interest, public-sector loan funds featuring flexible conditions and terms. During FY2020-2021, STEDO closed loans totaling \$548,100 for small businesses that projected the creation or retention of approximately 43 jobs in Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua Counties. The value of the outstanding loan portfolio among STEDO's current clients is \$2,450,539 with most investment targeted to the manufacturing and service sectors. STEDO's administrative structure consists of an 8-member Board of Directors with representation from each of the three counties. STEDO received \$600,000 additional dollars from EDA Cares funding with which it continues to assist small businesses with needs resulting from the pandemic.

SOUTHERN TIER EXTENSION RAILROAD AUTHORITY (STERA)

Freight volume remained level (4.9% decrease) compared to 2019 across the system, due primarily to COVID-impacted economic dislocations at shipping companies. However, several local freight shippers did increase carload volumes.

STERA was involved in the following six capital projects for a total of \$11,116,958 in FY2019-2020:

- *continued work on a project involving replacement of 8,000 linear feet of welded rail in Carrollton in Cattaraugus County, and repairing three bridges in Jamestown, one bridge in Salamanca, and one bridge in Olean; all work has been completed excepting the Olean bridge, for which STERA is pursuing a scope of work change*
- *continued work on a project in the Olean rail yard involving improvements to the engine house, installation of a yard video security system, installation of 6,000 6x8 ties, and replacement of 8 switches; STERA is seeking a change order to refine the project scope*
- *continued work on a project involving installation of approximately 13,000 ties, ballast, surfacing, repair/replacement of 3 public highways and 11 private farm grade crossings, and replacement of turnout switch timbers between Steamburg and Waterboro, and in the Poland Center area, all in one the Southern Tier Extension Line.*
- *continued closeout work on a completed project involving a track realignment and bridge repair project on the Southern Tier Extension line in Chautauqua County*
- *continued closeout work on a completed project involving tie replacement, track alignment, and grade crossing and turnout rehabilitation between Olean and Killbuck on the Southern Tier Extension line in Cattaraugus County*
- *continued closeout work on a completed project involving tie replacement and grade crossing rehabilitation between Olean and Portville on the Buffalo line in Cattaraugus County; STERA had received several extensions to utilize unspent funds to rehabilitate additional grade crossings*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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ALLEGANY COUNTY

Craig Clark
Kier Dirlam, Chairman
Charles Jessup
Deb Root
Jerry Scott

CATTARAUGUS COUNTY

Crystal Abers
Don Benson
Charles Couture
Robert Keis, Secretary
Norm Marsh
Donna Vickman*

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY

Joe Galati *
Jay Gould *
Don McCord
Pierre Chagnon
Willie Rosas
Paul Wendel, Jr.

SENECA NATION OF INDIANS

Lucille White

*Left during the year

STAFF

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Richard Zink

SR.REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR/EDA PROGRAM MANAGER

Tom Barnes

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

Jason Eastman

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR/LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS MANAGER

Kimberly LaMendola

CLEAN ENERGY COMMUNITIES COORDINATOR

Jon Mayr

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE

Fileve Palmer

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE SPECIALIST

Sarah Phearsdorf

