Building an Evidence Base: Assets and Challenges

Module 2

This document will serve as a the first in as series of files created to profile the HQP attributes featured in the SET module training sessions and show how they are integrated into the high quality level plan produced by the Southern Tier region in New York. The Southern Tier region did not participate in SET, but the document produced as a result of their regional planning efforts does embrace many of the high quality plan concepts. Where their plan falls short of the SET High Quality Plan guidance, guidance on how your region could write a similar section that better aligning to SET will be offered.

Introduction

Building a strong evidence base depends on an ability to analyze relevant data and formulate conclusions and strategies that align with these. Within the High Quality Plan Attributes, this evidence falls into two main categories: (1) Assets and Challenges and (2) Comparative Advantage (discussed in a later Module). The demographic features explored within Module Two provide an excellent foundation for describing overarching assets and challenges within the region. While Module Seven will explore these further, the data from Module Two will be a valuable part of the story.

Analyzing the Southern Tier Population Trends

The Southern Tier region of New York demonstrated an adept understanding of assets and challenges through their Southern Tier's Approach to Economic Growth document. Below is a summary of how basic data from the Southern Tier region was analyzed to identify population trends that ultimately informed the creation of the plan's five leading strategies.

Pages 45-47 display the analysis completed on using the population data and the resulting trends and conclusions. More importantly, the Southern Tier region highlighted the population trend strategic findings on page 47, which provide the initial link between data analysis and strategic planning.

Through their data analysis, the Southern Tier surmised that their population has been aging over the last 20 years with the most rapid out migration of 25-44 year old persons happening in the last 5-10 years. The decreasing number of 25-44 year old persons has caused a drop in the 0-14 year old population, which has a resulting impact on the future work force, tax base, and regional economic sustainability.

Coupled with the decrease in the 25-44 population is a significant "brain drain", which has had an amplified effect due to the very low rate of "brain gain". This trend means that the region as a whole is losing their pool of highly educated workers that are critical to current and future economic development. This critical population group is heavily influenced by quality of life, infrastructure, and job opportunities, which are and will continue to be economic development focus areas in order to reverse this population decrease.

Pages 49-50 summarize data related to health in the region. Six health challenges were identified: (1) the high rate of overweight, obesity and smoking and the growing rate of chronic disease, especially diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer; (2) the disparity in healthy lifestyles between urban, more educated people and people living in sparsely populated, rural areas; (3) recruitment of primary and specialty care providers as well as technical and therapeutic support staff; (4) development of health care workforce training programs to prepare for future needs; (5) enhanced collaboration among health care systems; and (6) cost-effectively addressing the health care needs of its aging population.

Impact of Population Trends on Planning and Strategy Development

The trends extracted from the population analysis played a definite role in the development of the region's five key strategies. In particular, the desire to eliminate brain drain and increase the 25-44 age bracket is incorporated into Strategy 5: Strengthen the Southern Tier's Economic Development Backbone. This strategy includes components that improve critical infrastructure, increase quality of life and improve neighborhoods, while also creating sites for new development that will promote job opportunities in existing and emerging job clusters. Southern Tier knows that maintaining this critical population sector is paramount to establishing economic sustainability in the region. Likewise, Strategy 3: Health Care 2020 – Integrating Health Care Providers, Higher Education and Cutting-Edge Technology was directly tied to the challenges identified in examining health related data.

Your Plan: What to Do in Module Two:

Carefully consider the data provided or other information you can examine on the region's demographics. What do these data say that might guide the planning process? What are the overarching assets and challenges you can identify at this point? Begin working on "Evidence Basis for Plan" in the template.

Continue building this section as you explore the topics within the modules below:
Module 5: Workforce assessments
Module 6: Cluster analysis
Module 7: Assets and barriers